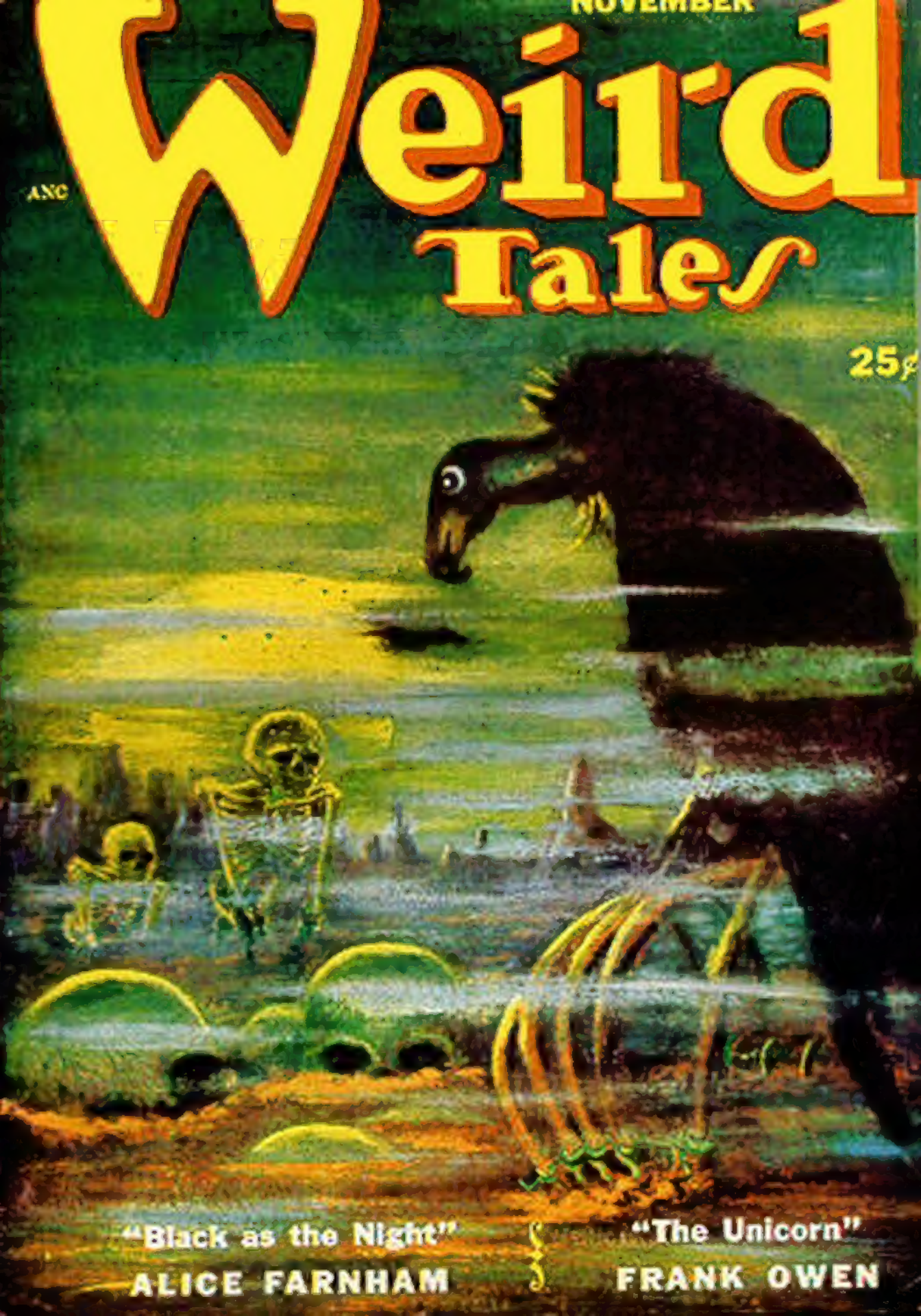

NOVEMBER
Weird Tales
25¢
"Black as the Night"
ALICE FARNHAM
"The Unicorn"
FRANK OWEN

20 TOP TUNES $2.98

LESS THAN 15¢ A SELECTION!

YOU SAVE $14.82

NOW AVAILABLE—FOR THE FIRST TIME AT THE MOST SENSATIONAL MONEY SAVING PRICE OF ONLY $2.98 . . . the 20 TOP HITS that are being whistled and sung all over America. These Records, bought separately in the stores would cost you up to $17.80. You can choose from packages of Hit Parade songs . . . Hill Billy favorites . . . or the most loved Hymns.

Each package contains a full hour of musical enjoyment. They are ***all brand new*** and each record plays twice as many songs as regular records, containing ***four complete 3-minute selections per record.*** They are break-resistant and will play on any standard type 78 rpm phonograph. For those with 45 rpm changers, special packages of 45's are also available.

THE BIGGEST PHONOGRAPH RECORD BUY IN TOWN!

We urge you to fill in and mail Coupon NOW! Play these 20 selections for 10 days in your own home. If you are not delighted, return within 10 days for FULL REFUND.

DON'T DELAY! RUSH YOUR ORDER for your favorite GROUP NOW!

20 HIT PARADE TUNES

Anytime
Tell Me Why
Cry
Here Am I Broken Hearted
Please Mr. Sun
I'll Walk Alone
Perfidia
Wheel of Fortune
A Guy Is a Guy
I Wanna Love You
Kiss of Fire
Blacksmith Blues
Pittsburgh, Pa.
Blue Tango
Forgive Me
Gandy-Dancers Ball
Trust in Me
Tulips and Heather
Stolen Love
The Little White Cloud That Cried

20 HILL BILLY TUNES

Heart Strings
Alabama Jubilee
How Long Will It Take
Crazy Heart
Always Late
Slow Poke
Hey Good Lookin'
I'll Still Want You
Mom and Dad's Waltz
I Don't Wanna Be Free
Travelin' Blues
Missing in Action
Music Makin' Mama From Memphis
Driftwood on the River
These Things Shall Pass
Give Me More and More
Baby We're Really in Love
Let Old Mother Nature Have Her Name
Somebody's Beatin' My Time
Too Old to Cut the Mustard

20 MOST LOVED HYMNS

Our Lady of Fatima
Onward Christian Soldiers
Abide With Me
Moonlight Madonna
Away in a Manger
The Bell
Adeste Fideles
Noel
Good King Wenceslas
Serenata
Ave Maria
The Lord's Prayer
The Bells of St. Mary
The Rosary
Deck the Hall With Boughs of Holly
These Things Shall Pass
Songs My Mother Taught Me
Little Town of Bethlehem
Silent Night
Spirit of Christmas

IMPORTANT—These Tunes are kept constantly up to date—only the latest and most popular hits are kept on the list.

MAIL COUPON NOW—10-DAY TRIAL OFFER

TOP TUNES, Dept. T
79 Cambridge St., Boston, Mass.

Gentlemen: Please RUSH the 20 Top Selections on your NO-RISK 10-day money-back guarantee. I enclose $2.98 for each group of 20 selections with the understanding that if I am not completely satisfied you will return my money.

☐ 20 Hit Parade Tunes $2.98
☐ 20 Hymns $2.98
☐ 20 Hill Billy Hits ... $2.98
☐ All 3 Groups of 60 Songs $7.95

Name.....
Address.....
City..... Zone..... State.....
☐ Check if for 45 rpm.

Amazing NEW WATCH with MECHANICAL BRAIN!

It "Remembers" Tells Time Tells Date

Date Changes AUTOMATICALLY EVERY DAY

Miracle Achievement of Famous SWISS Precision Watchmakers!

MATCHING EXPANSION BAND *Free* OF EXTRA COST

TIMES PLANES

TIMES SPORTS

TIMES SHOP WORK

TIMES LAB WORK

Special Offer

NOT AT THE $75 YOU'D EXPECT

$8.95 PLUS 60c FED. TAX

Act Now AND SAVE!

WHAT A BUY!

WHAT A BUY! Now, for only $8.95 you can own a *lifetime Swiss timepiece* with features seldom found even in $75 watches. Our wholesale type merchandising makes it possible for us to bring you this **DIRECT SWISS IMPORT** at a fraction of its worth. Amaze your family and friends with the magic-like action of this **AUTOMATIC CALENDAR — STOPWATCH — CHRONOGRAPH — WRIST WATCH.** See the date change automatically every day. *Time races, sports, lab work, photography,* etc. And, yet, for gifts . . . no one will ever guess its modest cost. It's a perfect gift for every occasion: **BIRTHDAY, GRADUATION, ANNIVERSARY, CHRISTMAS** or any other holiday. If you've always wanted a precision watch but did not care to pay $75.00 or more, don't miss this offer. **ORDER TODAY** while supply lasts.

Unconditionally GUARANTEED FOR TWO YEARS!

LIFETIME SERVICE CERTIFICATE

You never pay one penny for the skilled repair service of our master craftsmen, Parts excepted.

OVER 40 QUALITY *FEATURES . . . Seldom Found Even In $75 Watches!*

Imported Swiss Precision Movement. **GUARANTEED ACCURATE**, supremely dependable. **PUSH BUTTON START AND STOP. RED SWEEP SECOND HAND** for instant viewing. **Shatterproof crystal never needs replacing.** Triple chrome plated case **ALWAYS** looks brand new. Fully **SHOCK RESISTANT** and **ANTI-MAGNETIC** . . . electricity can't affect it! **Radium glow dial** for easy viewing at night. Unconditionally **GUARANTEED.** Complete how-to-use instructions included. All these features plus dozens more make this amazing timepiece **the buy of a lifetime.** Don't say later, "I'm sorry I missed out." **MAIL COUPON NOW** while offer lasts.

SEND NO MONEY!

Rush coupon for immediate delivery. Wear it 10 days without obligation. Supply is, of course, limited. Order today.

FREE

OF ADDED COST . . .

MATCHING METAL

E-X-P-A-N-S-I-O-N WATCH BAND!

YOUNG PRODUCTS Dept. 469 2605 ELMHURST, DETROIT 6, MICH.

TRY 10 DAYS AT OUR RISK - RUSH COUPON

YOUNG PRODUCTS, DEPT. 469
2605 ELMHURST AVENUE DETROIT 6, MICHIGAN

Send ..... Chrono-Calendar watches at $8.95 plus 90c Fed. Tax each. I will deposit with Postman special low price plus postage. If I'm not delighted after 10 days, I may return watch for full refund of purchase price.

NAME_____

ADDRESS_____

CITY_____ STATE_____

☐ SAVE MORE If you send cash, check, M. O. . . . WE PAY POSTAGE. Same money-back guarantee.

NOVEMBER, 1952 Cover by Anthony Di Giannurio

BLACK AS THE NIGHT . . . . . Alice Farnham 10
. . . Jet's yellow eyes were on her, and Moira began to learn just how a dog could hate!

THE UNICORN . . . . . Frank Owen 21
Bandits and Mandarins, they all coveted the Unicorn; but it belonged to a small boy, last seen climbing a hill where no hill was.

ASTRA . . . . . Arthur J. Burks 26
. . . forty cents' worth of bananas, untold shoes and costumes! Could gremlins or leprechauns cash and carry?

THE ARTIST AND THE DOOR . . . . . Dorothy Quick 31
The house and contents had been exorcised of evil—but maybe the door had been left open, the holy words lost outside.

THE JAPANESE TEA SET . . . . . Francis J. O'Neil 39
Scalding, searing hatred was to be far stronger than love, strong enough to fling aside the veil separating life from death.

FERMENTATION . . . . . Curtis W. Casewit 44
Grapes grafted on cactus . . . the whole wine industry in revolution.

WEIRD CROSSWORD . . . . . Charles A. Kennedy 51

THE CHAPEL OF MYSTIC HORROR (A Novelette) . . . . Seabury Quinn 52
Connection, my friend—? Is there not connection between the serpent and his venom, between the devil and the flames of hell?

(Copyright 1928 by Popular Fiction Publishing Company)

THE MERMAID (Verse) . . . . . Leah Bodine Drake 75

THE CHAIN . . . . . Hamilton Craigie 76
Someone—or something—had entered, passing, as it seemed, through steel and stone and concrete, like a djinn or a wraith.

(Copyright 1923 by the Rural Publishing Company)

THE EYRIE 6

Published bi-monthly by WEIRD TALES, 9 Rockefeller Plaza, New York 20, N. Y. Reentered as second-class matter January 26, 1940, at the Post Office at New York, N. Y., under the Act of March 3, 1879. Single copies, 25 cents. *Subscription rates:* One year in the United States and possessions, $1.50. Foreign and Canadian postage extra. The publishers are not responsible for the loss of unsolicited manuscripts although every care will be taken of such material while in their possession.

Copyright, 1952, by WEIRD TALES. Copyright in Great Britain
Title registered in U. S. Patent Office.

178
Vol. 44, No. 1

PRINTED IN THE U. S. A.

D. McILWRAITH, *Editor*

Picture yourself going places

You've done it often. Call it day-dreaming if you like, but you've seen yourself in a bigger job — giving orders and making decisions — driving off in a smart new car — buying your family a fine home.

There's nothing wrong with dreams. But how about making them come true? *You can do it*, if you're willing to try!

Look around you. The men who are going places are the *trained* men. They've learned special skills that bring them better jobs and higher pay. It's the men *without* training whose dreams never come true.

What are you going to do about it? Just wait and wish? If you really *want to succeed*, you can get the training you need by studying at home in your spare time. International Correspondence Schools offer you a course in just about any field you choose, giving you the practical plus the bedrock facts and theory. No skimming or skimping! And you'll be earning while you learn. Students report better jobs and more pay within a few months.

Look over the list of subjects in the coupon below. Pick out the one that interests you most — the one that holds the greatest future for you. Then mark the coupon, and mail it today. *Find out* what I. C. S. can do for you. It costs only a stamp or postcard, but it's the first step if you want to go places!

SMARTEST THING HE EVER DID

"I noticed that the trained men held the better jobs. That's when I decided to take an I. C. S. course. Enrolling with I. C. S. was one of the smartest things I ever did. The position as Plant Engineer I hold today is largely due to the 'know-how' derived from my I. C. S. texts. I. C. S. can help any man who will study."

L. P. S., Elkhart, Ind.

DON'T let these poor excuses make you **FAIL**

1. I never got started.
2. I want a good time.
3. I don't want any responsibility.
4. I can't stick to it.
5. I haven't enough education.
6. I don't know where to get training.

GOING INTO THE ARMY OR NAVY? Earn more pay, win a higher rating, quicker promotion by having this specialized knowledge and credit. I. C. S. courses have helped thousands advance in the services.

INTERNATIONAL CORRESPONDENCE SCHOOLS

ICS

BOX 3279-H, SCRANTON 9, PENNA.

Without cost or obligation, please send me the booklet about the course BEFORE which I have marked X:

☐ Please send information about I.C.S. employee training for companies.

ART
- ☐ Commercial Art
- ☐ Magazine and Book Illustrating
- ☐ Cartooning
- ☐ Show Card and Sign Lettering
- ☐ Fashion Illustrating

AUTOMOTIVE
- ☐ Automobile, Mechanic
- ☐ Auto-Elec. Technician
- ☐ Auto Body Rebuilding and Refinishing
- ☐ Diesel—Gas Engines

AVIATION
- ☐ Aeronautical Engineering Jr.
- ☐ Aircraft Engine Mechanic
- ☐ Airplane Drafting

BUILDING
- ☐ Architecture
- ☐ Arch. Drafting
- ☐ Building Contractor
- ☐ Estimating
- ☐ Carpenter and Mill Work
- ☐ Carpenter Foreman
- ☐ Reading Blueprints
- ☐ House Planning
- ☐ Plumbing
- ☐ Heating
- ☐ Steam Fitting
- ☐ Air Conditioning
- ☐ Electrician

BUSINESS
- ☐ Business Administration
- ☐ Certified Public Accountant
- ☐ Accounting
- ☐ Bookkeeping
- ☐ Stenography and Typing
- ☐ Secretarial
- ☐ Federal Tax
- ☐ Business Correspondence
- ☐ Personnel and Labor Relations
- ☐ Advertising
- ☐ Retail Business Management
- ☐ Managing Small Business
- ☐ Sales Management
- ☐ Salesmanship
- ☐ Traffic Management

CHEMISTRY
- ☐ Chemical Engineering
- ☐ Chemistry
- ☐ Analytical Chemistry
- ☐ Petroleum—Nat'l Gas
- ☐ Pulp and Paper Making
- ☐ Plastics

CIVIL, STRUCTURAL ENGINEERING
- ☐ Civil Engineering
- ☐ Structural Engineering
- ☐ Surveying and Mapping
- ☐ Structural Drafting
- ☐ Highway Engineering
- ☐ Reading Blueprints
- ☐ Concrete Construction
- ☐ Sanitary Engineering

DRAFTING
- ☐ Aircraft Drafting
- ☐ Architectural Drafting
- ☐ Electrical Drafting
- ☐ Mechanical Drafting
- ☐ Structural Drafting
- ☐ Sheet Metal Drafting
- ☐ Mine Surveying and Drafting

ELECTRICAL
- ☐ Electrical Engineering
- ☐ Electrician
- ☐ Electrical Maintenance
- ☐ Electrical Drafting
- ☐ Electric Power and Light
- ☐ Lineman

HIGH SCHOOL
- ☐ High School Subjects
- ☐ College Preparatory
- ☐ Mathematics
- ☐ Commercial
- ☐ Good English

MECHANICAL AND SHOP
- ☐ Mechanical Engineering
- ☐ Industrial Engineering
- ☐ Industrial Supervision
- ☐ Foremanship
- ☐ Mechanical Drafting
- ☐ Machine Design-Drafting
- ☐ Machine Shop Practice
- ☐ Tool Design
- ☐ Industrial Instrumentation
- ☐ Machine Shop Inspection
- ☐ Reading Blueprints
- ☐ Toolmaking
- ☐ Gas—Electric Welding
- ☐ Heat Treatment—Metallurgy
- ☐ Sheet Metal Work
- ☐ Sheet Metal Pattern Drafting
- ☐ Refrigeration

POWER
- ☐ Combustion Engineering
- ☐ Diesel—Electric
- ☐ Electric Light and Power
- ☐ Stationary Steam Engineering
- ☐ Stationary Fireman

RADIO, TELEVISION, COMMUNICATIONS
- ☐ General Radio
- ☐ Radio Operation
- ☐ Radio Servicing—FM
- ☐ Television
- ☐ Electronics
- ☐ Telephone Work

RAILROAD
- ☐ Locomotive Engineer
- ☐ Diesel Locomotive
- ☐ Air Brakes ☐ Car Inspector
- ☐ Railroad Administration

TEXTILE
- ☐ Textile Engineering
- ☐ Cotton Manufacture
- ☐ Rayon Manufacture
- ☐ Woolen Manufacture
- ☐ Loom Fixing
- ☐ Finishing and Dyeing
- ☐ Textile Designing

HOME ARTS
- ☐ Dressmaking and Designing
- ☐ Cookery
- ☐ Tea Room Management

Name_____ Age_____ Home Address_____

City_____ State_____ Working Hours_____ A.M. to_____ P.M.

Occupation_____

Special tuition rates to members of the Armed Forces. Canadian residents send coupon to International Correspondence Schools Canadian, Ltd., Montreal, Canada.

Do You THINK in Circles?

Do you ask yourself, "How shall I begin; what shall I do next?" Have you a confusion of ideas? Mastery in life, success in any enterprise, comes from the subtle ability to marshal your thoughts, to call to the fore, when an emergency arises, the proper mental powers. Mentally, you are an aggregate of forces. Why dissipate them because of lack of knowledge of how to properly use them? Learn to unite them, and you will have at your command, a *tremendous power* for accomplishment.

SEND FOR FREE BOOK

The Rosicrucians have preserved for centuries knowledge of the secret method for the development of mind power and the direction of man's unused inner faculties. This wisdom, not strange or mysterious, has changed the course of life for many men and women throughout the world. Write for the free, sealed book which explains how you may obtain this helpful information. Address: Scribe G. X. R.

The **ROSICRUCIANS**
(AMORC)
SAN JOSE • CALIFORNIA
(Not a religious organization)

Scribe G. X. R., The Rosicrucians,
San Jose, California

Please send me a copy of the sealed booklet, "The Mastery of Life," which I shall read as directed. No representative will call.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____

No Question About it...

Lee is your best value in Work Clothes!

America's Best-Made, Best-Known Work Clothes

Union Made. Buy them at leading retail stores coast to coast.

COPYRIGHT, 1952

The Editor, WEIRD TALES
9 Rockefeller Plaza, New York 20, N. Y.

By all means renew my subscription to W. T. for another year.

And permit me to renew my plea: keep W. T. weird! So weird that every sound in the house is a Thing, every flutter at the window, a vampire bat, every whisper, the voice of a lost soul . . .

I've been reading W. T. for over 20 years. Its fine literary style is as thrilling as its stories. *Fred E. Ebel*
Milwaukee, Wisconsin

The Editor, WEIRD TALES
9 Rockefeller Plaza, New York 20, N. Y.

I have recently had the distinct pleasure of having read two stories by one of the most promising young writers I have come across in many years.

When I first read Curtis W. Casewit's first effort, "The Mask," in the March '52 issue of W. T., somehow the unavoidable mark of distinction lurking within Mr. Casewit's lines in his story made itself immediately obvious.

After reading his second and best effort to date, "Table No. 16" in the September W. T., truly one is able to see the spark of genius found only on rare occasions when a Hemingway, Bradbury or a Lovecraft is discovered. Such is the true form of originality and talent that is rarely found today. H. P. L. had it, and so did Weinbaum; but the world was inappreciative of them when they were among us, and it only lauded them to the hilt after they left for other worlds. Suffice it to say that Curtis W. Casewit is one of fantasy's greatest finds *in many years. (Incidentally, I assume that Casewit is a real person and not just a* nom de plume.*)

In reference to the rest of W. T., of late you have definitely shown a very remarkable trend for the better. Surely one of the best known fiction as well as oldest S. T. Fantasy magazines deserves all the distinction possible. Naturally the weird-eerie type story shouldn't be confused with the more common and ubiquitous science-fiction field. Science-fiction as a whole can be written by anyone today, and usually is; whereas the weird tale *requires the sensitive touch of an artist, such as that of Curtis W. Casewit's or Seabury Quinn's as an example.* *Calvin Thos. Beck*
New York Science-Fantasy Society

* No, he's real enough. We sent Mr. Beck's letter on to Mr. Casewit, thinking he might like to answer it and prove his reality. Incidentally, Casewit writes us that "Table No. 16" is to be filmed for television in Hollywood.

—Editor, WEIRD TALES

The Editor, WEIRD TALES
9 Rockefeller Plaza, New York 20, N. Y.

The drawing illustrating Lovecraft's "Hallowe'en in a Suburb" is a masterpiece of art. Here is genius. *This man Finlay in his line stands superbly alone.*

Arthur G. Learned
Stamford, Connecticut

$100.00 A WEEK in CASH
PAID DIRECT TO YOU

FAMILY HOSPITAL PLAN

Policy Pays for a Day, a Week, a Month, a Year—*just as long as necessary for you to be hospitalized!*

JUST LOOK
The Large Benefit This Low Cost Policy Provides!

This remarkable Family Hospital Policy covers you and your family for about everything—for *every* kind of accident—and for *all* the common and rare diseases, and there are thousands of them. Serious diseases such as cancer, tuberculosis, heart diseases, diseases involving female organs, and abdominal operations are also fully covered after this policy is in force six months. Suicide, insanity, and venereal diseases are understandably excluded.

The money is all yours—for any purpose you want to use it. There are no hidden meanings or big words in the policy. It is the kind of protection that will stand by you when emergency comes. We urge you and every family and also individuals to send for this policy on our 10 day free trial offer—and be convinced that no other hospital plan offers you so much for your $1.00 a month!

TWO SPECIAL FEATURES

MATERNITY

Benefits At Small Extra Cost
Women who will some day have babies will want to take advantage of a special low cost maternity rider. Pays $50.00 for childbirth confinement either in the hospital or at home, after policy has been in force 10 months. Double the amount on twins.

POLIO

Benefits At No Extra Cost
In lieu of other regular benefits policy pays these benefits if polio strikes—
For Hospital Bills, up to..... $500.00
For Doctor's Bills while in the hospital, up to $500.00
For Orthopedic Appliances, up to $500.00
TOTAL OF $1,500.00

3c A DAY IS ALL YOU PAY
for this outstanding new Family Protection

Wonderful news! This new policy covers everyone from infancy to age 70! When sickness or accident sends you or a member of your family to the hospital—this policy PAYS $100.00 PER WEEK for a day, a month, even a year . . . or just as long as you stay in the hospital. What a wonderful feeling to know your savings are protected and you won't have to go into debt. The money is paid DIRECT TO YOU to spend as you wish. This remarkable new Family Hospital Protection costs only 3c a day for each adult 18 to 69 years of age, and for age 60 to 70 only 4¼c a day. This policy even covers children up to 18 years of age with cash benefits of $50.00 a week while in the hospital—yet the cost is only 1¼c a day for each child! Benefits paid while confined to any recognized hospital, except government hospitals, rest homes or sanitariums. Pick your own doctor. Naturally this wonderful policy is issued only to individuals and families now in good health; otherwise the cost would be sky high. But once protected, you are covered for about every sickness or accident. Persons covered may return as often as necessary to the hospital within the year.

This is What $100.00 a Week Can Mean to You When in the Hospital for Sickness or Accident

Money melts away fast when you or a member of your family has to go to the hospital. You have to pay costly hospital board and room . . . doctor's bills and maybe the surgeon's bill too . . . necessary medicines, operating room fees—a thousand and one things you don't count on. What a Godsend this READY CASH BENEFIT WILL BE TO YOU. Here's cash to go a long way toward paying heavy hospital expenses—and the money left over can help pay you for time lost from your job or business. Remember—all cash benefits are paid directly to you.

Examine This Policy Without Cost or Obligation—Read It—Talk It Over—Then Decide

10 DAYS FREE EXAMINATION

You are invited to inspect this new kind of Family Hospital Plan. We will send the actual policy to you for ten days at no cost or obligation. Talk it over with your banker, doctor, lawyer or spiritual adviser. Then make up your mind. This policy backed by the full resources of the nationally known Service Life Insurance Company of Omaha, Nebraska—organized under the laws of Nebraska and licensed in other states. SEND NO MONEY—just your name and address! No obligation, of course!

PAYS CASH BENEFITS REGARDLESS OF ANY OTHER HOSPITAL INSURANCE YOU NOW HAVE!

FREE INSPECTION . . . MAIL COUPON
The Actual Policy Will Come to You at Once Without Cost or Obligation

The Service Life Insurance Company
Hospital Department J-11, Omaha 2, Nebraska

Please rush the new Family Hospital Protection Plan Policy to me on 10 days Free Inspection. I understand that I am under no obligation.

Name.....

Address.....

City or Town.....*State*.....

SERVICE LIFE INSURANCE COMPANY
· Hospital Department J-11, Omaha 2, Nebraska

The Editor, WEIRD TALES
9 Rockefeller Plaza, New York 20, N. Y.

I see that you occasionally publish letters from people. You seem to like knowing which story we readers like best—and I am an old reader of W. T.

Well, sir, this time it's no doubt the story about the waiter and the table (Table No. 16 by Curtis W. Casewit in WEIRD TALES *for September) which is the very best. I'm a waitress myself, and I know how very money-greedy my male colleagues are! I was much impressed by the story.*

P. Joske
Canoja Park, California

The Editor, WEIRD TALES
9 Rockefeller Plaza, New York 20, N. Y.

I feel that last issue's letter from Joseph V. Wilcox contra *H. P. Lovecraft contained enough misleading and opinionated matter to warrant a rebuttal in your pages.*

Mr. Wilcox objects to Lovecraft's style as "affected, turgid, and labored." That is to say, it was complex and dense. So was that of Poe. Lovecraft belongs among writers who cultivated a special manner consciously. As time passes, such writers tend to refine their style until an almost esoteric effect is produced. This makes for difficult reading, but if the style is warranted by the effect, it is certainly permissible. I feel that in the main Lovecraft justified his mannerisms by employing them skillfully and controlling them judiciously.

If H. P. L. "lacked the ability to tell a plain tale and tell it straight," so did Machen, Conrad, Faulkner, and Dickens, to name just the first that come to mind. Neither clarity nor objectivity is necessary in the dream-like effect Lovecraft sought.

Similarly, "reticence and detachment" are not necessary for "a good ghost story" (I can't think of a single true ghost story in Lovecraft's work). Reticence and detachment are earmarks of a certain kind *of horror story; not of all. Lovecraft felt emotional involvement, and wrote that way. Concerning the Mythos and its genuine contribution to fantasy, I can only say that to me it rings true as an admirable feat of the creative imagination. In the midst of one of H. P. L.'s stories I momentarily share his superb escapist dream of an awesome cosmos of veiled, implacable forces and unknowably vast patterns. This is the highest praise I can offer this artist.*

WEIRD TALES *has pioneered in presenting three unique talents of the first rank: Lovecraft, Derleth, and Bradbury. Each has his special strengths and weaknesses, each his special admirers. Though my preference is probably clear, I hope I do not overvalue my favorite to the point of undervaluing others.*

James Wade
Chicago, Illinois

The Editor, WEIRD TALES
9 Rockefeller Plaza, New York 20, N. Y.

I have a two-fold purpose in writing to your magazine; in the first place, although I always mistrust the "your magazine is wonderful" type of letter, I must say in all fairness, that as regards the quality of material published, you are way ahead of the other pulps. I don't mean that I like all the stories, many of them are too inspired for my atrocious tastes, but all seem to me to have some thought behind them, they don't read as if they were dashed off by an author with the single thought in his mind, "That's another ten cents."

I should like to see more of H. P. Lovecraft. I have an insatiable appetite for his work; anyone not agreeing has no business to be reading WEIRD TALES *anyhow.*

The illustrations are good; some of the covers don't excite me, but one can't expect everything for a shilling.

After the bouquets, the ulterior motive! I am interested in getting in touch with any fellow readers of like morbid and bloodthirsty tastes in literature, for the purpose of corresponding and forming a loosely-knit Fan club here. If anyone interested will write to me, I will undertake to circulate names and addresses.

(*Continued on page 74*)

ALLURE...
with a "PERSONAL" TOUCH

EXCITING
PANTIES and NIGHTIE
With Motto or Initials

There's "Sheer" magic in the breathtaking loveliness of the chantilly style black lace panties. Fetching and fascinating, you "wear your heart on your hip" with a daring, darling motto or personalized initials. The glorious nightie is an inspiring creation that beautifully combines clinging multi-filament rayon with delicate peek-a-boo black lace. The accent is on lovely, lovely you in these glamorous "personally yours" garments. Irresistible gifts that make you irresistible.

Nightie Colors:
Maize Lime
Orchid Apricot
Pink Blue
Panties
In Black Only

Nighties
$8.95 ea.
Panties
$5.00 ea.

QUALITY BAZAAR, 214 E. 49th St., New York 17, N. Y.

Please send me ... Nightie, ... Panties. Enclosed $..... check, cash or money order, postage prepaid. Sorry, no C.O.D.

NIGHTIE—Color ....., Sizes: 32, 34, 36, 38, 40 [circle size desired]
PANTIES—Black Only, Sizes: Small, Medium, Large [circle size desired]
MOTTO [Check One] ( ) I Love You ( ) Forever Yours ( ) Dangerous Curves ( ) No Trespassing

INITIALS .....

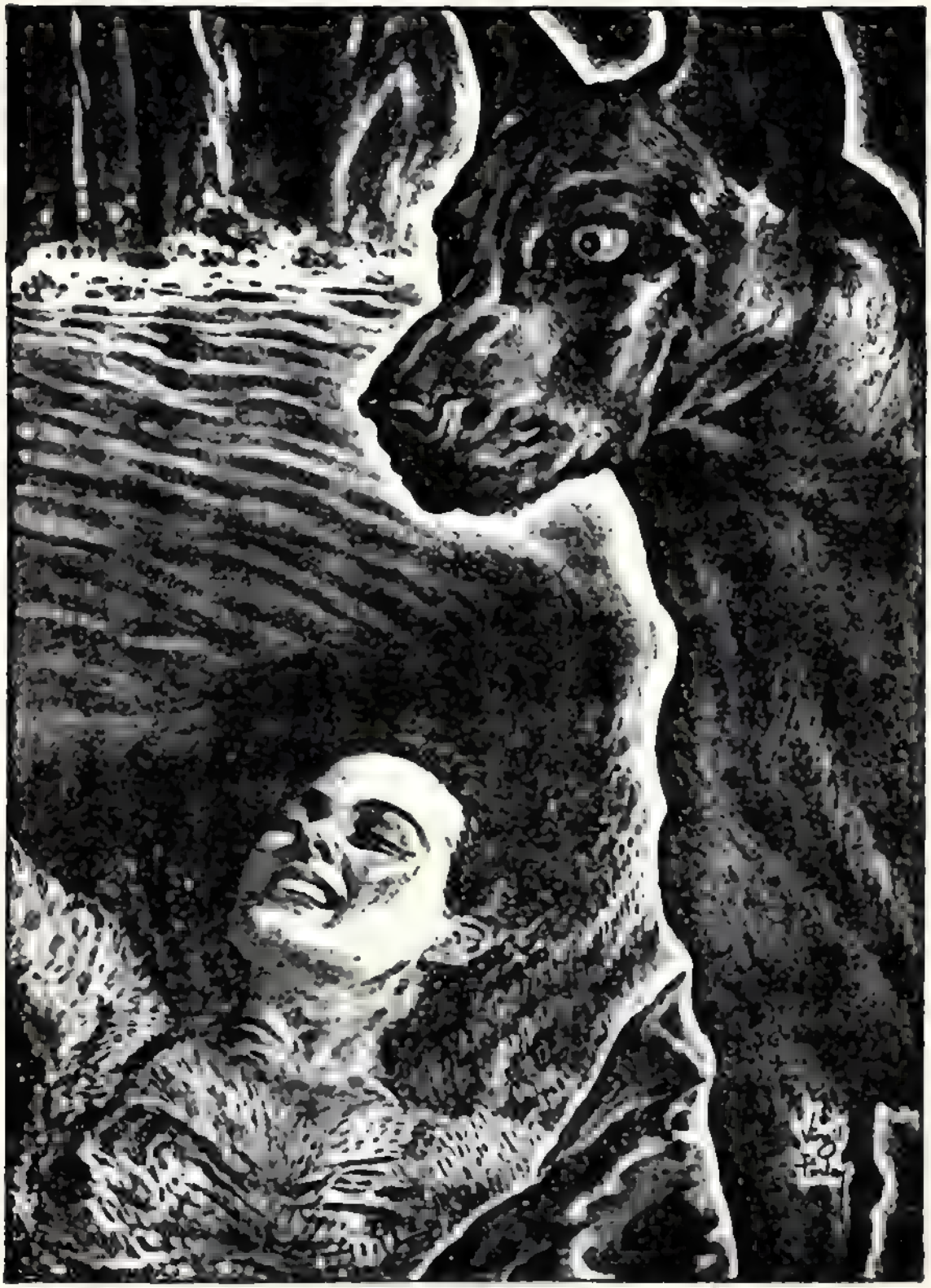
NAME .....

ADDRESS .....

CITY..... ZONE..... STATE.....

RUSH COUPON NOW

"... look at her now, watching that road like a jealous woman."



Heading by Virgil Finlay

Black as the Night

By Alice Farnham

"BUT somehow," said the housekeeper slowly, "somehow I don't rightly feel that creature *is* a dog."

Her pleasant face was troubled. Behind the steel spectacles, her eyes wore a puzzled, thoughtful look.

"It's—it's more as if she was human, somehow, human as you or me—but *bad*. Bad all the way through!"

The grocer's man, on his weekly visit to the lonely house by the sea, looked uneasily down at the great black beast stretched out in the doorway, its unwinking amber gaze on the white lane that led into the London highroad.

"Look at her now!" said the housekeeper in a low voice. "Watching that road, like a jealous woman! Oh, it's fair give me the creeps, I tell you—knowing what I know, and staying here night after night alone with that beast!"

The grocer's man edged behind the table.

"Oh, no fear of that! I've a good stout stick—you see it there in the corner—and I made sure to keep it handy. My husband will have me bring it. But it's not the likes of you and me she'd trouble with. And it's not her teeth I'm afraid of—it's the cunning mind of her, and what may happen now that his honeymoon's over and he's bringing his new wife home!"

The grocer's man brightened.

"Coming today, ain't they?"

Utterly indifferent, the dog continued to stare at the empty road that wound among the rocks, away from the cliff and the sea.

"Ah!" said the housekeeper darkly. "And stand in her shoes I wouldn't, not for a million pounds, George Ottey!"

She dropped her voice, almost as if afraid the dog might overhear.

"I remember what happened to his first wife, poor thing, right here on this very spot!"

"Suicide, wasn't it?" faltered the grocer's man. "Suicide, they called it. Only some said, accident."

"It was murder," said the housekeeper, half beneath her breath. "Murder down among those rocks, and no one the wiser but me! Murder—and I know the one who did it!"

The dog lifted its head then and looked at her steadily, its yellow eyes alight with perfect intelligence. The upper lip lifted just a trifle over the sharp white teeth in a silent snarl; and then the dog turned its head back and once again lay motionless, watching the lonely road.

At its other end, in London, Moira Glenn stepped laughing into her new husband's car to begin a long journey.

BY CHARLES' expression she could see that the laugh had been a mistake, but you can't just switch a laugh off in the middle—your face feels so foolish. Oh dear, that's the worst of marrying on such short acquaintance, she thought. I don't know which things I can laugh at and which I can't.

Charles' nice mouth set in rather a stubborn line. He was thin and dark and intensely serious, which was perhaps why light-hearted Moira loved him. That, and his wonderful skill as an artist, and the hint of tragedy in his past.

"I'm sorry it strikes you as ridiculous," he said stiffly. "Mrs. Bunty told me at the last minute she won't stay any longer than a week, and I can't very well let Jet starve just because—"

"Just because she has a rival," Moira finished gravely. "All right, darling. It's Ho

for Road's End I can do with the sea breeze anyway!"

Ho for Road's End was all very well, but when Moira saw the place she felt a sinking of the heart. Lonely, Charles had said; but she had never pictured anything so savagely remote as this gray stone house on the cliff. Silent and dark and ugly it stood near the edge, under an overcast windbroken sky. Beyond it, a path led down through a scattering of jagged rocks to the sea. Three wind-bent fir trees at the back leaned inward, all their branches flung out toward the house, as if long ago they had frozen in that attitude of supplication.

Moira felt suddenly cold. Oh, why, why did it look like this? Why couldn't the sun have stayed out? She shivered as the car drew closer, and slid her hand under Charles' arm.

"A bit out of the world." He gave her a half-apologetic look. "But you said you wouldn't mind, you know, darling. As long as we're together, you said."

"I know." She squeezed his arm. "Silly, of course that's all that matters!"

But the feeling of chill and apprehension persisted. This house wanted none of her.

A furious barking broke out within the house, high-pitched and almost hysterical. Charles laughed, the tension broken.

"Jet's heard the car! Now Mrs. Bunty will let her out!"

The heavy front door opened slowly, and a black form came bounding out to tear round the lawn in widening circles, still barking wildly.

"What a beautiful dog!" exclaimed Moira involuntarily.

"She's taken two prizes." Charles' manner was offhand, as he guided the car to a stop. "I've had her from a puppy, you know. That's seven years."

Jet continued to race about in circles, her fluid black body moving with effortless grace. Her pointed ears were laid close to her head, her long muscles rippled under the smooth silky coat.

"She's a beautiful thing—I'm going to love her. But what's she running for?"

"Showing off, for my benefit. Now she'll pretend I'm not here—it's a regular ritual. She hasn't noticed you yet."

Slowing to a stop, Jet abruptly sat down, a tall graceful creature with a fine economy of line that delighted Moira's artist soul. Conspicuously she did not look at the car, but at a point twenty feet to one side of it. Her yellow eyes were fixed upon that point with what appeared to be great interest; only the erect alertness of the pointed ears betrayed her.

"Born actress, isn't she?"

Charles spoke with pride.

JET'S head moved just a fraction. Her gaze wandered to the sky. A crow flapped across her range of vision, and she barked at it once rather mechanically.

Charles stepped down from the car, and on the instant she had covered the intervening distance in two bounds. In a frenzy of joy, she leapt to his face half a dozen times before he could quiet her.

Suddenly the dog stood back. Its body stiffened. Watchful, wary, hostile, the yellow eyes stared into Moira's.

"Get out and make friends with her. Don't be afraid!"

"I'm *not* afraid!" Moira was rather resentful as she scrambled out of the car. She held out a coaxing hand. "Hello, Jet! Good girl—come then!"

Jet backed away, her eyes still intent upon Moira's. Her coat bristled almost imperceptibly.

"It's no use, Charles." Something—reaction perhaps—caused an absurd prickle of tears behind Moira's eyelids. This overcast sky, this foreboding house, the unfriendly dog. "She—we'll just have to get used to each other by degrees."

Charles waved his newspaper at the stout aproned figure in the doorway.

"Back on time, Mrs. Bunty!" he called.

Smiling, Mrs. Bunty shook her head. She knew, and he knew, that she had stayed a day beyond her time, and that it was distinctly felt on both sides as a favor. Her presence was needed at home, and her bicycle stood waiting by the kitchen door.

"I'm glad to see you back, sir. Bunty's

been that impatient he's been ringing me all day on the phone. I told him I'd be along just as soon as I'd finished the clearing up."

"Yes, yes," said Charles hastily. "We'll try not to keep you. Er—my wife, Mrs. Bunty."

Moira thought she saw an odd look of compassion on the housekeeper's face as she turned toward her. It lasted only a second, while Mrs. Bunty civilly acknowledged the introduction and withdrew, but still it was somehow disconcerting. My own servants to be sorry for me! She thought with a trace of anger, of which she was immediately ashamed.

Dinner was a rather silent meal, served with an expedition quite new to Moira but to which she was later to become accustomed. The dog lay in a corner by the empty stone fireplace, chin resting on her outstretched paws, watching them steadily as they ate.

"Mrs. Bunty's the salt of the earth," Charles said once. "Good yeoman farmer stock. Husband's an invalid—that's why she needs the job."

"I like her looks," Moira admitted, "but I have a feeling that she thinks employers should be kept in their places. Sh—here she comes now with dessert."

They fell silent again. The dog continued to watch them from her corner.

Strangely, the constraint which Moira had mentally attributed to the intermittent presence of Mrs. Bunty still persisted after she had gone.

I've never felt like this with Charles before, she thought. I must be crazy. For a fleeting instant she saw the lighted coziness of their room at the hotel, felt again the warmth and gay intimacy that had so lately been theirs, saw Charles' face bright with eager longing, heard the rumble and the clatter of traffic in the streets below that intensified their delicious isolation. Already it seemed half a lifetime away.

It's a long way to Picadilly, she thought ruefully. But it wasn't; the trip had taken them less than two hours. That was why Charles had bought the house, he told her: close enough to London for him to keep up the necessary contacts with agencies and advertisers, remote enough to provide the solitude that his work demanded. Moira felt a little homesick when she thought of the office; she wondered if they missed her. She might not be so gifted an artist as Charles, but she had carved a nice little niche there for herself all the same.

They'd tried to scare her out of her impulsive marriage, of course.

"My good girl, what do you know about the man?" Bill Conway had demanded, waving his pipe. "He comes, he goes, he sells, he gets commissions—and dwells in some Godforsaken hole in the rocks along the Cornwall coast. What do you think you'll do down there—count bats?"

Involuntarily now her gaze strayed to the dark beams. No bats.

"I'm going to inspire him to higher things," she had retorted. "And for your information I love solitude and I'm fond of rocks and I grow all pink and merry on sea air. And I'm going to—" she had hesitated, "make up to him a little, if I can."

For Caroline. But why had Caroline killed herself, she wondered now, looking across the room at Charles. Why, and how?

He was absently stroking the dog that lay at his feet. Looking up, he caught her eye and smiled.

"Lonely old place," he said apologetically. "Think you'll be happy here?"

Moira perched on the arm of his chair and ruffled his hair.

The dog gave her an inscrutable glance, got slowly to its feet and walked away. Charles' eyes followed it, but he said nothing.

"Of course I will, silly! Especially if Mrs. Bunty goes with it."

LATER that night she was not so sure. When they went up to bed, the dog followed as a matter of ourse, and Moira lost her temper.

"Charles, really! You're not going to tell me that animal stays in our room all night!"

Charles looked gently obstinate.

"But she'll get lonely! She always *has* slept in the bedroom, Moira. Even when—"

Moira wanted to cry, "Even when Caro-

line was your wife?" but she couldn't say the words, even in her anger.

Charles persevered.

"You told me you liked dogs, Moira. You said you were used to them."

"So I do, and so I am," said Moira shortly. "But in our family dogs were slightly subordinate to the rest of the family. They didn't dominate the household. And I warn you, Charles Glenn, if that dog stays in here at night I don't. We'll sleep in separate rooms."

Charles gave in. In a rather sulky silence he put Jet outside in the passage, despite beseeching jabs at him with her forepaw. She refused to go voluntarily, and in the end had to be dragged across the room in a sitting position by her collar. Charles' lips tightened as he shut the door on her whines, but he still said nothing.

The whining kept up all night. Sometimes it rose to the pitch almost of a howl, and at others sank to a sort of sobbing; but it never stopped for more than a few minutes at a time. And all night long Moira lay quite stiff and still on her side of the bed, in the unhappy knowledge that Charles, too, was awake and unmoving.

Toward morning she must have fallen asleep. When she awoke the room was empty.

"Mr. Glenn had to go to Pembroke on business," Mrs. Bunty told her, serving her lonely breakfast in the deserted dining-room. Sunlight peered timidly through the narrow windows and lay in thin fingers on the floor. The dog was nowhere to be seen.

"Mrs. Bunty—" Moira stopped abruptly. She amended her question. "Is—is Jet about?"

Again that curious look of pity, and then Mrs. Bunty averted her eyes as she set down the teapot.

"The dog went in the car with Mr. Glenn, madam."

"Too bad." Moira helped herself to marmalade and reflected on the stupidity of last night's jealousies and irritations when examined in the morning sunlight. "I was hoping to make friends."

"If you can, madam," said Mrs. Bunty gently. "I recall the first Mrs. Glenn feeling the same. But she found, poor thing, some dogs and some people won't be made friends with."

She stood for a moment in the doorway.

"If you'll excuse me, madam, I think—it's not my place to say it—but sometimes I think it's important to know who our enemies are, at the very beginning."

The door closed very softly behind her. Moira sat staring at it for a moment, and very slowly and thoughtfully finished a piece of toast.

Strange. Very strange indeed. Dogs weren't your enemies. They were your friends. You just had to know them.

Nothing in the world more natural than that Charles should have become attached to the dog in the three years that had passed since Caroline's death. In a sense Jet had been his only companion. Charles, with his almost morbid sensitivity, would have shrunk even more than his wont from meeting other people. The dog had become the friend of his solitude. How silly of her to have resented that friendship, even for a moment! And how silly of Mrs. Bunty, to seem to suggest—

With a little impatient movement of her shoulders, Moira went out into the kitchen. Mrs. Bunty was scouring a table, her back turned. Absently Moira fingered a cup.

"Mrs. Bunty, how long has Mr. Glenn had this dog Jet?"

Mrs. Bunty straightened up.

"I couldn't say exactly, madam. I know he'd had her it might be three years before he married the first time. Then it was just two years after that—"

"I know," Moira struck in hurriedly. Only she didn't know; Charles would never speak of it. "You say—you say the first Mrs. Glenn didn't care for dogs?"

The housekeeper shook her head.

"She'd one herself when she came here, a cute little thing. Jet killed it. Oh yes!—Mr. Glenn would never believe it," she added, at Moira's startled look. "But Jim Roberts' boy, from the village—he saw them, up on the moors. The two of them went out for a run that day, but only Jet came back.

All happy and frisky and wagging her tail. They found what was left of the little dog, three miles on the moors, but Mr. Glenn said it couldn't be so. He said the boy was lying."

Mrs. Bunty dipped a reflective brush in the bucket of soapy water.

"It was about then that Mrs. Glenn stopped trying to make friends with Jet."

Moira felt a little sick. On impulse she said, "You don't like Jet, do you, Mrs. Bunty? Are you afraid of her?"

The housekeeper put her brush down. She did not answer for a moment. When she did, it was to nod toward a stout ash stick leaning in a corner by the stove.

"I'm not afraid of her—no. But there are bad dogs as well as bad people. I'd not stop in this house without that stick for company."

Moira's eyes went to the stick for a second, and then she turned away. Gossiping with a servant, she thought shamefacedly. And probably nothing but village talk, all of it. Prejudice and dislike: I'll close my mind to it.

WHEN she had finished unpacking, she spent the day in not unpleasant exploration. There was a savage beauty in that barren spot that somehow explained the hold it had on Charles. She followed the little ravine leading from the house to the sea, and clambered over the rocks tumbled about the water's edge.

Charles found her standing there, gazing out to sea, her hair blown straight back by the strong salt wind. When she heard his voice she turned and held out her hands. Her face was alight.

"Oh, Charles, isn't it splendid? This is where I'm going to spend my time!"

For just that instant she noticed an odd look of strain about Charles' face, and then it was gone. He kissed her and held her to him for a moment.

"Darling, I did make an ass of myself last night! Can you forget it?"

"Darling, there were two of us!" answered Moira promptly. Standing on tiptoe, she kissed him again. "Let's forget it!"

When he released her, she saw that he was staring at the rocks beyond her. The look of strain was intensified.

"Look!" She pointed to a pool just below them, hemmed in by rocks on the shoreward side, except for a narrow passage. "That's where I'm going bathing tomorrow!"

A muscle twitched uncontrollably in Charles' cheek. Turning, he pulled her roughly along the path away from the sea. The hand gripping her arm was shaking.

"Charles, what—"

He didn't look at her.

"Get away from there!" he said harshly. "Get away, stay away! Get away from those rocks!"

He pulled her faster up the path, so fast that she stumbled.

"Charles, stop it! Tell me why—"

But suddenly she knew why. She stared at him with horror.

"Oh Charles, did—? Is that—?"

Charles' pace slackened a little, but he still wouldn't look at her.

"She couldn't swim." His voice was harsh. "She just—walked into the water. There. There in that pool. Nobody ever knew why. Jet found her when the tide went out. She—Jet stood guard over her. I found Jet there, between the rocks, and Caroline lying on the sand. The tide—the tide went out, and left Caroline lying in the bottom of the pool."

She could see it. She saw Caroline lying quite still in a few clear inches of water, Jet silently watching. Her scalp prickled.

"Charles—"

"Here's Jet," he said, in a different voice. "Mrs. Bunty's let her out. Hi, girl! Good dog!"

Jet bounded down the ravine with her ears back, her whole face one laugh of delight.

"Good dog!" echoed Moira faintly. She held out her hand. "Come then! Come along, Jet!"

With a shock of utter unbelief she saw the dog come toward her, wagging her black stub of a tail with a placating whine.

"You see?" Charles was triumphant. "I told you she'd make friends!"

Mechanically Moira patted the dog's eager head. Jet licked her hand, and then, barking excitedly, leapt up to lick her face. Involuntarily Moira shrank back, cloaking her revulsion with an unsteady laugh.

"But, Charles—Jet, what's come over you?"

Panting with eagerness, the dog continued to leap at her face.

"Oh, Charles, must she?" Moira pushed her away, with a look of apology. "I'm ever so happy that she's making friends—if only she wouldn't lick my face—"

"Down, Jet!" The dog groveled. "Stop it—you're making a nuisance of yourself!"

Jet slunk along at his side. The three walked up the path in silence. Moira realized with a slight sinking of heart that though the dog cast her a reproachful glance now and then, accompanied by a pathetic licking of Charles' hand, Charles himself would not look at her. Somehow, in spite of Jet's new-found friendliness, Moira had managed to offend him. She had been put in the wrong—"by a dog," she thought wonderingly.

"I notice Jet's making up to you," said Mrs. Bunty, a day or two later. "Just when Mr. Glenn's here."

Moira stared at her book without answering. So I didn't imagine it, she thought. It *is* only when Charles is here that Jet acts so friendly.

More than friendly, really. Affectionate—almost embarrassingly so. So heartbroken at the faintest breath of coldness, so pointedly going to Charles for comfort. As if—

Moira gave herself an impatient little shake and tried again to concentrate on her book.

"She used to beg him to get rid of that beast," said Mrs. Bunty, going ponderously toward her pantry. "Half crying, she was over it—yes, many's the time."

Moira closed her book. Jet was lying on the hearthrug.

"Here, Jet," she called softly. "Come, girl—come over and let me pat you."

The dog raised her head. She stared at Moira with an unwinking yellow gaze, but did not move. In that total lack of response there was something almost of contempt.

Pressing her lips together, Moira crossed the room. She knelt down.

"Let's make friends, Jet. Shall we go for a walk?"

She put out her hand to stroke the sleek black head, but there was a barely audible growl. Almost in one movement the big dog got to her feet and sprang away, her hackles bristling.

Moira stared at her, her mind a confusion. Jet hadn't changed, then. But why the pretense?

AT A sound still inaudible to Moira, Jet pricked up her ears. Moira scrambled to her feet and heard it too—the low deepening hum of Charles' motor turning down the lane. The dog dashed to the front door and began to whine, pawing at it in her eagerness.

Moira stood beside the closed door and looked down at her. She was filled with sudden anger.

"Oh, no you don't!" she said through clenched teeth. "I'm sick of your always being first!"

Darting to the corridor door, she closed it swiftly behind her and drew a deep breath. When Charles switched off his motor and jumped out, she ran out the side entrance to meet him.

"Hello, darling!" she called gaily. "I thought you'd never get here!"

From the house there came wail after earsplitting wail. Charles' face darkened. He kissed her perfunctorily.

"What on earth's wrong with Jet? Is she locked up?"

Moira tried to laugh.

"No, darling—not really. I just forgot to let her out when we—I heard you coming."

Charles said gently, "You don't understand what a disappointment that was to her." Loosening her arms, he went toward the house, leaving Moira to follow. She dropped her eyes for a moment, to hide the sudden tingle of tears. But what utter nonsense—to be crying because Charles loved his dog!

Blinking the tears away with a little

shamefaced laugh, she hurried after him.

Jet, released, was ecstatic. Like an arrow from a bow she flew out, circled the house twice and then leapt to Charles' face over and over, with an hysterical abandon not to be denied.

When Charles finally pushed her away with a soft, "Down, girl!" she seemed suddenly to recollect Moira, standing rather stiffly to one side. Cringing, wagging her tail, her whole body writhing in exaggerated submission and supplication, she crawled over to Moira and began licking her hand. Without thinking Moira drew it away.

"Why do you do that, Moira?" Charles' voice held displeasure. "Don't you realize she's sensitive? Why must you show so persistently that you dislike her?"

"My God!" said Moira, and stopped herself. Never—and Mrs. Bunty still in the house. "Let's go in," she finished lamely. "You must be starving."

Jet followed them, walking close beside Charles, wagging abjectly and shrinking away whenever she caught Moira's eye, quite evidently in mortal fear.

"As she always does," Moira thought bitterly. "As if when Charles is away I beat her!"

Dinner over, the washing-up concluded, she stood at the window watching Mrs. Bunty pedal away, sternly erect, into the gray dusk.

"Let's go for a walk, Charles," she said, with a touch of wistfulness. "On the rocks. Just—" No, not just the two of them. Never just the two of them. Only at night, and even then that haunting tragic presence just outside their closed door.

Charles looked up from his paper.

"I'm a bit tired, dear. Why don't you go—and take Jet?"

At sound of her name the dog moved closer and laid her head on his knee.

"That's—not what I meant." There was a lump in Moira's throat. She sank down on the hearthrug. "I don't—think she wants to go for a walk. Do you, Jet?"

The dog's tail wagged. With an almost imperceptible glance at Charles, she grovelled across the rug toward Moira.

"What an affectionate thing she is!" Charles' voice was fond.

Moira stretched out an unwilling hand. The dog cringed and drew back with a faint whimper, her body wagging apologetically as she shrank toward Charles. He put down his paper.

"Why on earth does she do that, Moira? She tries so hard to win your love—over and over I've seen her. But what have you done to frighten her?"

Moira sprang to her feet. She was shaking from head to foot.

"Charles Glenn, do you realize what you're implying? Are you really out of your mind?"

"I realize exactly what I'm implying," said Charles deliberately. "That your harshness and unkindness have hurt Jet's feelings so badly that she's afraid of you. A child could see that."

"I've never been unkind to an animal in my life!" Moira's voice rose. "You've put me in an impossible position ever since I came here—you and that dog between you! I've tried to be understanding, I've tried to—"

"Understanding!" His face was flushed with anger. "You don't know the meaning of the word! You're hard as nails where this poor dumb beast is concerned, and you know it. Jet's loving and sensitive—you've cut her to the heart. Don't you think a dog has feelings?"

"Don't you think a woman has feelings?"

Moira suddenly found herself screaming.

"Jet—Jet—Jet! Damn you, why did you get married at all? You don't need a wife—you've got Jet!"

She slammed the door behind her and ran up the stairs, weeping.

Charles slept in the guest room that night. He was gone when she came down, listless and swollen-eyed, to breakfast. Jet lay in the corner, her black body relaxed in easy grace. At Moira's entrance she raised her head but did not move.

Moira crossed the room and stared down at her. The dog's yellow eyes met hers without wavering.

"I hate you!" she said softly, bending

closer. "You understand that, don't you? I hate you!"

Not a muscle of Jet's face moved. Steadily she gazed at Moira.

In the end it was Moira who moved away, feeling shaken and slightly sick. She leaned against the open casement, staring at the heat-heavy garden without seeing it.

I must be losing my mind, she thought drearily. Talking to a dog like that—a dog!

For appearance's sake she attempted to eat the breakfast that Mrs. Bunty put before her, but it was no use. Her eyes kept straying to Jet in her corner. Always the dog's eyes were on her—watchful, steady, a depth of still dislike cloaked beneath that impassivity.

Abruptly Moira rose from the table and walked upstairs. Padding footsteps followed. Sitting down at the dressing table, she could see in the glass Jet stretched out in the doorway, watching her.

"Get out!" she screamed suddenly. "Get out, get out!"

Springing to the door, she pushed it with all her strength against Jet's weight, and when she had closed it leaned against it, panting.

I'm losing my mind, she thought again. This isn't me—I've changed, I've changed! Something ghastly is happening to me, and I don't know what it is!

The day was a still and breathless one, a weight of motionless heat oppressing the air. From her window she saw the sea, heavy and oily at the foot of the cliff. Not a bird was in the sky.

A dog, she thought wonderingly. A dog is breaking up my marriage. No, that's impossible! That's absolute nonsense! It's I, Moira Burton, I've had kittens and cats and dogs all my life, and a darling old pony named Whiffle!

She walked the floor restlessly, without realizing that she did it. I'll go for a swim—no, Charles didn't want her to go swimming, because of Caroline. Perhaps she could read. Perhaps—

If only Jet would die.

The day grew steadily hotter, till it was effort almost to breathe. In the afternoon Charles put through a trunk call from London.

"Darling, I'll be a bit late. Look here, I'm frightfully sorry about last night. Did you sleep?"

Sunshine flooded Moira. She drew a deep breath.

"Oh, *Charles!* Oh, darling, I was so horrid!"

"I was horrider," he said apologetically. "I've got a bit unreasonable, I think—being alone so much. You know, I think perhaps we should stay in town. What do you think?"

"Oh, darling!" said Moira in a daze. "Just heavenly!"

"Better all around, I mean. You'd have company—and I imagine we could manage about Jet. Take her for walks and so on. Don't you?"

Jet! When Moira replaced the receiver a minute later, she felt curiously numb. Jet. Always Jet. Wherever they went, always Jet to be a third.

There was a slight movement behind her.

She turned and looked at the dog, her eyes narrowing.

"Oh, no!" she whispered. "You won't be there! He'll never know what carried you off—but believe me, my dear dumb friend, you won't be there!"

She felt strangely light and elated as the afternoon wore on.

"I'll have an early dinner, Mrs. Bunty," she said gaily. "I'm feeling quite ravenous. And then you can go, since Mr. Glenn won't be home until late."

When dinner was cleared away she still felt restless and excited, almost feverish. She was filled with the continuing intoxication of a decision taken which cannot yet be confirmed by action.

As she stood smiling by the drawing-room window, looking out with bright unseeing eyes, Mrs. Bunty came in to bid her goodnight, her sensible hat set squarely atop her smooth head. She hesitated a moment in the doorway, regarding Moira with an odd concern.

"I'm not just easy leaving you here alone, madam. If you'd like me to stay—"

Moira laughed. She felt gay and triumphant.

"Not a bit of it, Mrs. Bunty! Run along home to your family! I'm off for a walk along the cliff."

Mrs. Bunty took one step toward her. Her eyes held Moira's.

"Madam—don't take that dog with you! Whatever you do, promise me you'll not take that dog with you—or here *I stay!*"

Moira wanted to laugh. Mrs. Bunty was so terribly in earnest.

"All right, then—I promise. I'll lock the door behind me."

But when Mrs. Bunty had gone, her mood was a little deflated. The house was so very quiet. From the window she could see the lurid sunset. The water shone crimson as blood among the rocks.

I *will* go for a swim, she thought suddenly. Charles is an old granny, but he needn't know. After all, *I* can swim.

A few minutes later she was slipping down the rocky path in her swim suit, fastening her rubber cap. From the house behind her came a sharp, angry barking, and she laughed aloud. Silence followed, and then as she was almost down to the pool there was again the familiar sound of padding footsteps behind her.

"Oh, bother!" Moira said, under her breath. "Jet's jumped through the window!"

For a moment she stood undecided, while on sky and water the crimson stillness deepened. Should she go back to the house and lock Jet more securely? She seemed almost to hear the housekeeper's warning voice again, with that note of curious urgency.

Then she shrugged and laughed, turning once more to the sea, as Jet came down the rocks behind her. It was really rather funny. She looked back at the dog with amusement.

"I'm sure you're waiting, dear, for me to commit suicide too. What a hope! *I* can swim, you know!"

Silent, indifferent, the dog followed.

When Moira had squeezed through the twin rocks that held the entrance to the cove, Jet sat down between them, her body blocking the passage. The overcast sky, fiercely lit by an angry sun, was red.

MOIRA slid into the water, gasping at the coldness of it. The surf was rougher and stronger than she had expected, but she found it exhilarating and rolled over in the water, gasping with delight. The little pool was quite deep, the tide still coming in fast.

There in the narrow confines of the rocks the waves seemed to break with intensified force.

"I should have expected that," she thought, clinging for a moment to a rock while she got her breath. The red of the sky was fading, but the water was still like blood. "A fine idiot I'll look if a wave bangs me against a rock and bashes my silly head in!"

In a lull between waves, she loosed her hold on the rock and began swimming toward the passage. Jet still sat there impassively, silhouetted against the sky.

Moira cast an uneasy glance over her shoulder. That big wave was rushing in fast—best grab on to something—no, there was nothing to grasp—faster, faster! She could feel the swell of it beneath her, lifting her up like a feather—and then cried out in pain and fright as the wave hurled her against the sheer rock wall of the inner cove.

For a moment she lost consciousness. When she came to, choking and spluttering, she was clinging desperately to a tiny spar of rock near the water's edge. Her side was numb; there was a sickening pain in her head. The pool had faded to gray now, but around her the water was red. Dizzily, she tried to shake the water from her eyes. It was blood.

The passage. She must get to the passage, drag herself somehow over the rocks and home. Bracing herself with one hand against the sheer rock, she made a weak essay to swim with the other. Her arm hung limp and lifeless beside her.

For one instant, in a lull between waves, she thought dizzily, she heard someone calling.

"Charles!" she screamed, but her voice was drowned in the roar of the incoming surf.

With her one hand she clawed at the rock wall, feebly pushed against it with one

foot. Inch by painful inch, gasping and sobbing, she crawled toward the break in the rocks where Jet still sat immobile, watching her. It couldn't have been Charles, she thought dully. Jet's still here. Something in the dog's implacable pose struck her then with a cold thrill of fear. Against the red afterglow, between black enormous rocks, she seemed to loom huge against the sky.

Her last reserve of strength carried Moira to the opening in the rocks, at the very second that she knew she could have kept up no longer. Crying weakly with relief, she started to pull herself out of the water.

With a savage snarl, the big dog leaped suddenly to its feet, every hair bristling. Moira made one last attempt to clutch at the ledge, and the dog sprang. Recoiling, she lost her grasp.

"Charles!" she screamed again, and knew it was no use. There was only Jet, and Jet had won again. Once more Jet would have Charles to herself.

In the sharp clarity of imminent death it all became plain to her. As she felt herself sinking, she looked again, with a detached and wondering vision, at that black featureless outline between the rocks. And looked again in anguished intensity, and clawed again at the rock. For another figure was suddenly silhouetted against the fading light—a sturdy figure, with a stout club which rose and fell as the dog whirled around just a second too late.

Mrs. Bunty dropped to her knees at the water's edge.

"Woman dear, catch hold my hand!" she gasped, forgetting decorum for the first time in her life. "God, I thought I was too late! I thought that black beast had done for you!"

For a second Moira hung helpless and limp from Mrs. Bunty's firm hold on her arms.

"I can't!" she whispered. "I can't make it!"

"You've got to!" Mrs. Bunty's voice was urgent. "Now!"

She pulled with a will, and slowly, with pain that seemed breaking her body in two, Moira crawled out of the water, averting her eyes from the thing that had been Jet, and lay utterly spent on the wet rock. Mrs. Bunty was breathing hard from her exertion, and for a moment neither of them spoke.

"Something seemed to turn me back," said Mrs. Bunty. "A—just a kind of feeling, when I was almost half-way home. I just knew, like as if a voice had spoke, I shouldn't have left you alone with that dog."

A sudden noise sounded above the fret of the waves, the hoot of an auto horn.

"Charles!" Moira gasped. She raised herself painfully from the rock. "Oh, Mrs. Bunty, what will we do?" Their eyes met.

"He'll never believe it!" Moira whispered. "Quick, Mrs. Bunty— push Jet into the pool! We've got to tell him—what *can* we tell him?"

There was a splash, as Jet's body slid gently into the water. Mrs. Bunty knelt and washed the blood from the spot by the water's edge. Washing the club, she shoved it in a little recess in the rocks and pulled the scanty bushes across the opening.

"I found you in the pool together, madam," she said rapidly. "Jet was trying to save you—trying to save you, do you hear? The master would never believe what happened, not on our Bible oaths. He's deep, he'd cover it up—but all his life he'd hold it against you. Jet jumped in to save you, and a wave threw her against a rock and killed her, the same wave that nigh killed you."

"She died a heroine," murmured Moira, her eyes brightening. "Yes, he'll believe *that!*" Her mouth twisted with the irony of it. "I'll be hearing about it for the rest of my life!"

"I forgot something, we'll say, and come back and was a little worried to find you gone. Pulled you out just in time, and that's God's truth. When he sees the look of you, all covered with blood, and knows how close he was to losing you—trust me, madam, it's not Jet he'll be thinking of!"

"Moira!" called Charles, from the top of the path. "Moira darling, where are you? Where's Jet?"

Wildly, sobbingly, rocking back and forth, Moira began to laugh.

"He eats the wind: he chews the sunrise."

THERE was a woman of Hangchow who had a singular adventure. Her name was Lin Mie. Some would have considered her poor but she believed she was rich, glorying in the love of her husband Lin Wong. She had been married ten years but she was still childless. In China

Heading by Joseph Eberle

this is considered tragedy indeed. Her husband had longed for a son but he had not taken a secondary wife. Not always does a woman of China live little better than a slave existence, under the thumb of her mother-in-law. On the contrary, history records many instances of women completely dominating men, for example the love of the King of Wu for Hsi Shih, and Ming Huang's adoration of Yang Kwei-fei who permitted herself to be hanged to save her Emperor. This happened twelve hundred years ago but it is still lamented by poets as "the everlasting wrong." Usually the love which a Chinese has for his wife is something precious which he keeps within the walls of his garden. Truly written are the words, "A woman's hair draws more than a team of oxen."

One day when Lin Mie had been working long hours in the fields, she stopped for a moment to rest beneath a willow tree. A misty rain was falling, the soft, gentle rain of China that is unlike any other rain the world over. The air was fragrantly cool, and very silent, as though all nature were poised on tip-toe. Lin Mie was so very tired. Her arms ached and she folded them in her lap. Whether she slept or not she did not know but suddenly she realized that she was holding a sleeping child in her arms, a very little boy, about three years old. His hair was jet black, his nose was well-formed, his complexion was so pale he might not have been a Chinese at all. He was so handsome, like the child about whom she had always dreamed. Then he opened his eyes, they were blue, as blue as the early evening sky. This frightened her, for a person with blue eyes in China is usually blind. The child smiled and the radiance of his smile put the sun to shame.

"Mama," he said, and snuggled up to her.

"Who are you, little one?" she asked gently.

"I'm your boy," said he, "and you haven't given me a name. Besides I'm hungry. I haven't had morning rice."

So she took him into the house and cooked rice for him. As he ate she clasped her hands on the table before her. Was it only her imagination? Her hands were pale and delicately beautiful, not a trace of toil did they show. Even the nails were pointed and unbroken.

The boy said, "The rice is good."

"Rice is life," she said, "and life is good."

They named the boy Lin Mu, or rather the mother did, for Lin Wong showed a strange reluctance to call the boy his son, though he was happy that the little one had chosen to live with them. The name was very appropriate for Mu meant tree and by coincidence the family name, Lin, meant forest. And the mother thought, "My boy is indeed like a young tree, slim and strong enough to stand against a typhoon." Her happiness was complete, her eyes were large with wonder that such good fortune had befallen her.

One night as she made ready for sleep, there was a gorgeous bed where the old mattress had formerly been on the bare floor. And the sheets were of silk, petal soft. On the teakwood chair beside the bed was a sleeping-robe of caressive softness. She undressed and put on the silk robe and slipped between the fragrant sheets. She was so happy she wondered if this were all a dream and she would soon awaken to stern reality. Then her little boy crept into her arms, "Let me stay with you until papa comes," he whispered.

LIN WONG sat smoking before the door until his pipe was exhausted. He retired in the dark. When his body came in contact with the silken sheets, he disliked them immensely, for they were as slippery, he thought, as snake's skin. He was irked by the softness of the bed. After a sleepless hour, he tried the floor and slept at once.

During the following days, the mother seemed to grow younger and slenderer. But little change was to be noticed in the father, Lin Wong.

"How I wish that I could have a water-buffalo to do my plowing," he said. He thought seldom of his bodily comfort but constantly of his fields of millet, rice and turnips. They were a source of pleasure to him, as important as his heart or his lungs.

Toward noon little Mu said to his father, "Here is a unicorn. He can help you plow better than a water-buffalo. See, he is very gentle."

Lin Wong gazed astounded at the unicorn. He remembered all the mythical tales he had heard about that marvelous beast, that it springs from the Central Regions; that it has superior integrity and appears to virtuous people; that the mid-part of its cry is like a monastery bell; that it is the horned beast *par excellence*.

The unicorn had a white horselike body, covered with scales and a crested back; its hoofs were cloven. It had a long, bushy tail. Its head was akin to that of a dragon. From the center of its forehead grew a single horn. Despite its ferocious appearance, it was as docile as a small dog, following little Lin Mu wherever he walked.

In the days that followed the unicorn proved to be as good at drawing a plow as any water-buffalo. The gentleness of the huge animal was beyond belief. Sometimes Lin Wong wondered how it existed, for he never saw it eating or drinking, yet his son assured him the animal wanted nothing.

"He eats the wind," he said. "He chews the sunrise."

News of the presence of the unicorn on the farm of Lin Wong spread throughout the province, and though he did not know it Lin Wong had become famous. For does not the unicorn appear only to virtuous monarchs. Perhaps Lin Wong was a prince in disguise. Fabulous were the stories circulated about him. And at last they came to the ears of a notorious bandit, Loo Tak, who called himself a war lord. He was angered. Why should a simple farmer become so renowned? What had he done to merit it? Far better for him, Loo Tak, to own the unicorn. What man in the province was stronger than he? Although he was only of medium height, he had a giant's strength because he had four huge bodyguards. Now Loo Tak was no more than a festering blight on the face of China. Never had he owned anything that he did not first steal. Force, power, corruption were his gods. He lived ruthlessly, caring not how many people he ruined or despoiled. He had never known the devotion of a good woman. He had great wealth when applied to money and jewels and material things, but mentally he was a beggar. By everyone he was hated but feared. Not even his own bodyguard trusted him. However, he believed he was invincible. What he wanted he took, nor did he hesitate to slay. What idiot would stand up against him? So he decided that he would capture the unicorn. So sure was he of success that he took with him only one bodyguard.

SO HE went to the farm of Lin Wong. Nobody stood in his way but a very little boy. He stooped to cuff the boy and fell flat on his face. That was ignominy indeed. He couldn't understand it. What had happened? He was angered beyond words and his anger was against the child who was smiling. Again he lunged with his fist. This time he hit the earth with such force he was breathless. He was losing face before his bodyguard. Suddenly he decided to swallow his anger for now the unicorn was coming gently toward him. The little boy slowly approached the animal and stood so close that his body touched the animal.

The bandit smiled. His mission would be as easy as seizing a playful kitten. Despite its size the unicorn was absolutely docile. Loo Tak was without fear as he attempted to grasp the fantastic white animal. It was the last thing he ever did, for the unicorn impaled him on its horn and then tossed him so high that most of his bones were broken as he crashed to the earth. The unicorn stamped him into the soil until not a trace of the mighty war lord remained. Then the boy and the unicorn went back into the field again. The bodyguard fled. He had learned a bitter lesson. It is unwise to attempt to steal a unicorn.

Neither Lin Wong nor his wife were aware of the calamity that had overtaken the bandit who had believed himself to be invincible. Too bad that he did not know that even the tiger and the leopard are perpetually anxious lest they encounter a unicorn.

Now in Hangchow, also, lived the Mandarin Lim, an army general and therefore a Mandarin of the First Rank. On his conical-shaped official hat was an opaque ruby and coral button, an inch in diameter, set on the center of his hat like a knob. His girdle clasp was of jade set in rubies, on his breast and back was a square of silk, a foot in diameter, embroidered with the unicorn, the emblem of his high rank.

Lim did not look like a general for he was short and fat but he was tall in dignity and very vain. He had the delusion that he presented an impressive figure as his bearers carried his gaudy chair through the streets and lanes of the town. Before his equipage ran a number of criers, screeching discordantly and clapping cymbals so that all might move aside at the approach of such an illustrious person. How were they to know that Lim was a meek, pudgy little fat man who had never distinguished himself in battle. All his high honors were hereditary. About the only thing outstanding about him was his appetite. He disposed of such huge quantities of food even his servants marveled.

He spent most of each day munching kumquats and lichee nuts which were more delicious to him than even his concubines. He knew little of warfare and had no relish for it. He had never led an army in the field, but that did not prevent him from wearing a large variety of medals. He was pompous and vain even though his accomplishments were infinitesimal. His wealth had come to him from many generations of generals but he could not have been prouder of himself if he had earned it all through his military leadership.

Since the unicorn was his rightful emblem, he reasoned that it would be fitting that he own a unicorn. He did not stop to reason that nobody ever owns a unicorn, for a unicorn is one of the four supernatural creatures of which the dragon, the phoenix and the tortoise are the others. The unicorn is the king of all animals, associated with good government or the awakening of spring.

Little Lin Mu's mother used to think of him as a young prince, so perhaps the presence of the unicorn was not so extraordinary.

Meanwhile the Mandarin Lim mulled over his problem as he munched luscious tangerines. Unlike the bandit, he had no idea of snatching the unicorn. Money enough had he to buy what he desired. Unwisely he believed that gold can purchase anything. And yet it cannot cause one extra bud to appear on a rose bush, nor can it change the brightness of a single star, nor can it block the course of a typhoon. When a man is starving, he cannot eat gold, nor is the touch of gold half as satisfying as the touch of jade. Too much gold spoils a man's sleep, worrying about being robbed. To drink gold, is to woo death. There are many things gold cannot buy, among which is a gentle white unicorn. But of this the Mandarin Lim was unaware, for despite the fact he had studied at the Hanlin Academy, he had little education. His sluggish mind was incapable of retaining knowledge. How mortified he would have been had he been capable of realizing that in the things that count, he was a beggar. Even his dreams were threadbare, despite the fact that he slept between embroidered sheets on a teakwood bed.

MEANWHILE the Lin family prospered. The crops of rice, millet and turnips were abundant. The house gradually changed in appearance. Its austerity vanished.

But there was no change in Lin Wong. True, his farming was less arduous and he could smoke a pipe of tobacco without worrying over the cost.

One early evening when Lin Wong sat smoking before his door, there occurred such a commotion as he had never heard before. It was the clash of cymbals, the discordant beating of drums, and the ringing of bells, betokening the approach of the equipage of the Mandarin Lim as, elaborately gowned in full splendor, gaudy yellow and purple silk, embroidered with golden thread, and wearing the squares emblazoned with the unicorn, the emblem of his rank, he sat squeezed into the narrow confines of

his sedan chair, carried by four bearers, perspiring profusely. Before the house of Lin Wong, the discord stopped, and the Mandarin climbed down from his chair with a sigh of relief.

Lin Wong was amazed at the visit of so high an official and his mouth gaped open.

"Do I address Lin Wong?" asked the Mandarin pompously.

"Yes," was the reply but I have done no wrong."

"Be not disturbed, I came as a friend. I have heard that there is a unicorn upon this farm."

"That is true. He draws the plow."

"A menial task indeed."

"But a worthy one."

"Permit me to make known to you that I am the Mandarin Lim, a general whose emblem is the unicorn. Hence my interest."

At that moment a small boy came from in back of the house. He held a gleaming object in his hand. To the Mandarin it seemed to be a gold-piece. He was dismayed. How could he offer Lin Wong gold in exchange for the unicorn if he had so much of it that his little son could play with a gold-piece?

He smiled at the boy and patted his tiny head. Then he attempted to take the gold-piece from the child's hand, but without success. Might as well try to snatch a star from the sky. How could a small one have such strength? Yet he had touched the thing the child was playing with and it was definitely a gold-piece. But now Lin Mu opened his hand and a yellow leaf fell from it to the ground. The Mandarin was amazed. However could he have made such an error? But even as he questioned himself he somehow knew that the leaf only a moment before had been a gold-piece.

It was akin to magic. Nevertheless his determination to purchase the unicorn was in no way lessened. So he said to Lin Wong, "I would like a buy the unicorn."

"The unicorn is not mine to sell, it belongs to my son."

"How is it that the head of the house of Lin is ruled by so young a boy? It would be well for you to consider my offer, a catty of gold for the noble animal, gold enough to enrich you for the rest of your days. No longer need you toil in the fields."

The temptation was great and Lin Wong could not help mulling over the offer, chewing upon it as though it were a very choice morsel. He had never possessed a gold-piece. Of course, though he thought not of her, he had a beautful wife who grew younger in appearance every day as the years slipped from her like peach blossoms falling. He had a small son of rare beauty, who when he was with his mother was a veritable chatterbox. A unicorn made his plowing so easy it was almost effortless. And his house had become spacious, luxurious and friendly. Truly he had no need for a catty of gold but it lured him nonetheless. He would be enormously rich, he reasoned, so, at last he accepted the offer of the Mandarin.

BUT now his wife emerged from the house. She held the little boy by the hand and he was chattering as usual as he skipped along beside her. They passed Lin Wong without noticing him and paid no heed whatever to the mighty Mandarin Lim. His pomp was somewhat deflated and he was angry but he did not show it. He watched, even as did Lin Wong, the quiet way they walked down the long old road over which for centuries countless feet had trod, and on into the distance. Now they seemed to be climbing a hill though Lin Wong knew no hill was there. Was it only his imagination or were they fading from view as though their bodies had the texture of gossmare? A gentle breeze swept the countryside like a broom and then they seemed to be one with the sky and the wind and the evening glow. It was a strange sight to behold, but breathtaking too, like a dream's end or a white moth flying. Lin Wong sighed, and his hands shook. Too late, he realized that a man is not wise who attempts to sell a unicorn.

. . . it looked like instantaneous transmission of material items; nothing else could explain it.

Heading by Vincent Napoli

Astra

BY ARTHUR J. BURKS

MARY HALE opened her eyes slowly, knowing that the terror was with her again. It dribbled out of her hair in beads of sweat, though the time was winter and the big house always cold at night. Cold sweat made her feel as if all her taut body were a bleeding wound. She was instantly aware that Fred, behind her as she lay on her side, was awake, waiting, perhaps, for her to tell him again.

In her dream, which couldn't possibly be a dream and produce such definitely visible fearsome results, she preferred another man to her husband. Had she ever blurted it out while she slept? Didn't Fred behave strangely toward her? Hadn't he begun eyeing her with questions in his expression since the first of the . . . no, she simply *couldn't* call them dreams. Astral traveling? She simply couldn't believe in such nonsense. She could, of course, be going mad.

She turned to her husband, bursting into tearing sobs as his ready arms came about her, drawing her close.

"Again, Baby?" he asked softly.

"Yes, Fred, and if, when we go down to the kitchen—Fred, *am* I going mad?"

"Of course not, beloved. It isn't anything,

not really, that is; nothing we can't handle. What was it this time?"

"Shopping! I went shopping in a darkened store, after midnight. In fact, Fred, I just returned. It's ten miles from here to the store . . ."

"And if you just came back, I can testify that you haven't left this bed since you tucked yourself in beside me last night!"

"Well, then, this time I did something, Fred. I've tried things before, but nothing ever came of it. This time I put one of my calling cards under a can of kennel ration, well back in the shelf, so that it won't likely be found right away. If we go there, before the store opens . . ."

"We'll do it, Baby," said Fred Hale. "Now, what did you buy last night, or so early this morning?"

Should she, here and now, safe in his arms, tell him about George? George Bannett, who made her forget her husband completely, the instant he walked into her dream, astral travel, whatever it was? Awake, she knew no George Bannett, nor could she find him in any Lancaster-Lititz-Columbia- Ephrate- Elizabethtown- Marietta telephone book. He wasn't therefore, real. Yet, his *presents were*. At least, up until now they always had been.

"I bought three pounds of coffee, because it's cheaper, you know," said Mary Hale. Fred turned on the light, took down what she told him. "I bought a head of cabbage, a bag of Idaho potatoes, five pounds of sugar, three cans of evaporated milk, two cans of dog-food, our usual kind, three cans of cat-food, again our usual kind, four packages of frozen mixed vegetables, two pounds of sweet potatoes, three bunches of carrots, a bag of spinach, forty cents worth of bananas, altogther, it came to five dollars and twelve cents . . ."

"And you paid cash?"

"Yes, I had to. It's an A & P store, you know."

"That's one thing that gets me," said Fred slowly. "You always pay cash for this stuff you get somehow in the night, but no cash is ever missing from either your purse or mine. And all these stores, all through the neighborhood, which report, eerie nocturnal visitations, with unexplained cash rung up on their cash registers—and the cash in the dampers to match, and nothing stolen—report exactly the sum total you always tell me. Where does the money come from?"

Dared she tell her adored but inclined-to-be-jealous husband, that George Bannett always paid the bills? He was looking at her strangely now, preparing to answer himself somehow.

"Baby, in your dreams, where does the money come from?"

She would have been caught, flatly, if she hadn't been expecting the question.

"That's the mystery," she said. "I always know *then*, but never know *here*. I just know that the bill is always paid, in cash, and rung up on the cash register . . ."

"Maybe," said Fred softly, "there is something you're not telling?"

"Fred!"

"No need to disturb yourself about it—*is there?"* he asked.

She was flustered, of course, who wouldn't have been, for in the dream, or astral journey, whatever it always was, George Bannett wasn't her husband; he was something just as intimate, though, half of a relationship that the world frowned, or affected to frown, upon. Yet that part of her weird life with George Bannett was only implied; no slightest part of it came into her nightly experience—*to be remembered, anyway.*

"Well," Fred was saying, "which basket did you use?"

"I apparently forgot to take a market basket," she answered quickly, "so I selected a box . . ."

"What was in the box?"

"It had held, according to the legend outside, evaporated milk . . ."

Together they rose, noted the time, two a.m., and walked downstairs to the kitchen table. Atop the kitchen table was a fiber box, on the outside of which was splashed the name of a popular brand of evaporated milk. Inside the box a careful check indicated exactly the items Mary Hale had enumerated for Fred Hale on waking, just prior to two a.m.

MARY was an exquisite woman of twenty-five; in her nightgown she was exquisite plus, even when, as now, her cheeks were deathly pale.

"They weren't here when we went to bed," she said flatly.

"No."

"And I wasn't out of bed."

"No."

Even the sales slip, showing a total of five dollars and twelve cents, was tucked in among the mysterious items. Only, there was nothing mysterious about the items. They were real. The Hale family would eat everything here except the cat- and dog-food.

"The doors were all locked?" said Mary dully.

"All locked!"

"Fred, let's sell out! Let's go far, far away from here! Unless you think, as I'm beginning to, that I'm going mad."

"We can't run away," said Fred Hale. "Nobody ever runs away from the feared, successfully. Besides, my business is here . . ."

"But for *me*, Fred! You love me, don't you? I'm more important to you than your business?"

"Darling, you are all my life, everything I want, am, hope to have or be, but don't you see that we have to fight this thing out, right here where it started?"

"But none of it is possible, no matter what outlandish stuff one might believe in!"

"No, it isn't possible, but take a gander at that box of stuff from the A & P! That's real, Baby, and if we find your calling card, this morning . . ."

"And when it began, the necklace was real," whispered Mary. "So were the three dozen stockings, the half dozen pairs of shoes that just fitted me. So were the dresses for each social occasion, the coats, jackets, ensembles . . ."

"For a total of eleven hundred forty-seven dollars, to date, and thirty-nine cents! And none of it came out of my pocketbook or bank account, nor out of yours."

They were back in bed, with the alarm clock wound and set to waken them in time to drive the ten miles to the big store and hunt for the calling card, when Mary remembered something and just did manage to forbear gasping. Just before she wakened, perspiring in terror, George Bannett had said, almost casually:

"I'm coming to wherever you spend your days, and take you away! I'm coming sometime today! You might as well get set. Will you come with me, Mary?"

"I'll come, of course, George, you know that. I'll follow you to the ends of the earth!"

"If you knew where the ends are," he had smiled at her, "you wouldn't wonder nearly so much, what all this nocturnal prowling means. If people just knew how *active* they are, in what they call dreams, if they had the remotest notion of what *dreams are intended to hide*, a vast lot of time in human life would be conserved. Well, it is conserved now, but the dreaming sleepers would *know* it!"

Of course she could never tell Fred any of that.

JUST before they slept they checked on all the other stuff that had weirdly materialized after one of Mary's "dreams"—rather the total that all her scavenging dreams added up to. They still bore the price tags. Mary had been afraid to wear them, lest someone from wherever she had got each item—*and George had paid for it!*—should recognize it and start yelling "thief! thief!" She hadn't stolen anything, but surely she—and George Bannett—had broken and entered. But *had* they? While the strange facts of cash in cash registers had been reported to police, and eventually had got into the newspapers, so that a public avid for mysteries awaited each new, and brief report with eagerness, no "breaking and entering" report had been given to the police or the newspapers. It was presumed that the "prowler or prowlers" possessed keys. Mary Hale—and George—had returned at least three times to three scenes of their "crimes," while policemen stood guard at all locked entrances and exits, but no policeman, though each one had been tremendously chagrined, had seen anything unusual, or heard anybody, or any*thing!*

The newspapers had built up quite a case of negligence against the local police in Lancaster and several neighboring cities.

"Madame Blavatsky could have explained it perhaps," said one imaginative reporter. "She knew how to make earth spirits, kobalds, leprechauns, gremlins, pixies, catch and carry for her; it looked like instantaneous transmission of material items; nothing else seems to explain the cash in the registers, exactly totaling missing goods, in some instances! In other instances it couldn't have been checked but *may* have been merely pay for goods taken mysteriously in the night."

WHEN the store opened, Mary Hale and her husband were the first inside. Mary led the way to the kennel ration section, looked swiftly around to make sure she wasn't observed—and came up with the calling card!

By the time Mary and Fred reached home again, Mary was fit to be tied. She didn't believe in gremlins. Or kobalds, or leprechauns.

Inside her own home, Mary had hysterics. No telling where it might have ended had not Fred spoken out at last:

"Darling, I might as well confess. It's been a gag, understand? I got all this stuff at the different places, and planted it. I hoped I'd never have to tell you, but I thought I was in love, for a little while, with a woman named Georgia Bannett. I thought if I pulled a bit of stuff on you, and sent you off your rocker, maybe I could get a divorce . . ."

Mary stared at Fred in horror, her mouth hanging open.

"But, *Fred,* I have always told you the details of my dreams just before we found the stuff I dreamed I bought! You *couldn't* have . . ."

Then it struck her: "*Georgia* Bannett!"

Could she even ask a question about "Georgia" without telling something about "George!"

The doorbell chimed. Fred went to answer, returned almost at once with a queer expression on his face.

"A man to see you, Mary," he said. "It's the darndest coincidence . . ."

"Coincidence, Fred?" she heard herself asking.

"Yes. His name seems to be *George Bannett!*"

Fred trailed Mary as his wife, marching as if to the guillotine, went to the door, opened, looked out into the smiling face of—the man in her dreams, every last one of her dreams, her *prowling* dreams.

"*George!*" she managed.

"Bannett!" he snapped briskly, scarcely friendly at all. "Look, sister, this bill has been running long enough. Eleven hundred forty-seven dollars and thirty-nine cents. I never expected to have to spend so much money to get such a little way with any woman. I've come for either the money or the stuff!"

"Then you're not here for, that is, you didn't come to take . . ."

"The stuff? Yes, I did, if you don't pay up!"

"Mr. Bannett," said Mary, vast relief bubbling up in her, "is your wife's name *Georgia?*"

"Got no wife. That's my sister's name. She lives out in California. Not married, either. Why?"

"Never mind, and say, you can take back all that stuff, even today's vegetables and canned goods. Fred, if you'll just fetch it . . ."

"Never mind, Fred," said George Bannett, "my men'll get the things!"

NO SOONER had George Bannett spoken than every last one of the dream-propelled items piled themselves on the porch at his feet. Mary gasped. Fred Hale gasp, too.

George Bannett checked the items against his list, nodded.

"All of it seems to be here," he said. "Now, take it out to the car!"

Instantly the stuff was gone. George Bannett grinned.

"Gremlins today leprechauns yesterday, kobalds tomorrow!" he said, thumping the brim of his hat. "Want to go to my car and check?"

"Don't need to," said Fred. "There are garments on hangers in the tonneau now. There weren't any a second or two ago. No doors opened, no windows. How was it done?"

"I just told you. Well, so long."

"Before you go," said Fred, "what's the sense of all this? What were you trying to prove?"

"Why did you tell your wife you had thought yourself in love with Georgia Bannett, when she was out in California, and has been, for years?"

"Maybe," said Mary, looking queerly at Fred, "*he's* been dreaming true, too!"

"Dream?" said George. "Nobody dreams. Everybody thinks he does. What actually happens is this . . ."

George Bannett was gone, *in a flash*. The next instant he stuck his head out the window of his car, clear across the highway and yelled:

"I almost forgot, Mary! I really came for you. You coming?"

Instantly, as if there were no need to think about it, and just as she was, Mary started running toward George. She hadn't taken two steps before she found herself sitting beside him, quite comfortably, too. As the car started smoothly away she was aware of all the small voices, all around them, in the car, under it, on the roof, blending in what sounded like a single small, *very* small, voice, which said:

"If more people knew how much fun it is, a lot more would be going in for it!"

Mary Hale laughed, happily, and George Bannett grinned at her.

"There'll be no more *day*dreaming, Mary, understand?"

I bought the door—even though the auctioneer warned of evil.

The Artist and the Door

BY DOROTHY QUICK

THE advent of the artist and the door was almost simultaneous. I have always wondered if the one would have been as sinister without the other. Of course, the evil was in the door, but if the artist hadn't come along just then perhaps it might never have been released. I say that to comfort myself, but I know it isn't true. Evil is evil. It is a power and its strength is beyond mortal knowledge. Even without the artist there would have been horror. He only served to give it speedier expression.

But I am ahead of myself. The story goes back to my desire to have a carved door for my Elizabethan farm house.

I had rescued the cottage from demolition. It was just a frame when I first saw it, but the Tudor structure was there and two of the old tiny-paned glass windows had miraculously survived. The old beams were still in place and one linen fold panelled room which I visioned for my study. There was a gap, like a missing tooth, where the front door had been.

I bought the house and restored it tenderly into the lovely place it now is. I did it with care and devotion, but my entrance door was modern and an anachronism. I hated it, but I told myself someday I would find an old one in keeping with the rest of Little Tudor—the name I had bestowed on my home.

I moved in, made friends with my neighbors, particularly the ten-year-old daughter of the people who owned the Manor house of which the farm had originally been a part. Anne was old for

Heading by Frank Kelly Freas

her years and bookishly inclined. When she heard I was an author, she read my historical novels and accorded me a kind of hero worship that was good for my lonely spinster's heart. She was always under foot and my brother, Weston, who lives with me and looks after my affairs, said, "She's good for you, Tansy. She keeps you from too much work and loneliness."

Weston was right. He had to be in London a good deal attending to my contracts, for my novels are done in the cinema and on the wireless, and there are quite a lot of details to look after for which I have no head. I wouldn't be half the money-maker I am without Weston's pushing. As it is, we do very well.

When he was away I welcomed Anne's society. We grew very close and her parents were delighted. They were busy enough, Sir Richard with his bird raising and Lady Salter with her young. She had five children younger than Anne. So all in all, Anne was with me a good deal of the time.

I was alone, however, the day I found the door. It had been a day I intended to devote entirely to work, so I'd told Anne not to come over. The morning's writing had gone very well, but after lunch I struck a snag. Katherine Howard, my current heroine, proved difficult, the facts about her too obscure to fit into my plot. "You need air" I told myself sternly, and went out to the barn for my car.

AS I drove the Bentley past the road leading to the Manor I slowed up, but Anne wasn't in sight, so I rode on, thoroughly enjoying the Kentish countryside. It was in springtime blossom and the apple trees in full flower provided such breath-taking beauty I could hardly keep my eyes from them long enough to do justice to my driving.

As a matter of fact, it was fortunate there was no traffic on the back roads I had chosen or anything might have happened. I gave myself up to the season and wove in and out and around every orchard I could find. All at once I noticed a group of cars and carriages, even a riding horse or two, standing by an old stone fence. I stretched my neck and saw at the end of a long lane a dark, forbidding stone house with a sign hanging from one of the windows announcing "Sale Today." There were people going in and I realized it was an auction.

I added my Bentley to the cluster of cars and walked up the lane. Auctions have always fascinated me, and a country one is usually something special. When I saw the door I knew why I was here. I had been led. There it was, just what I needed for Little Tudor, The Farm, Aldringham, Kent. It was of oak polished by centuries of wind and rain, carved by the hand of man in Tudor times—just what I wanted.

I went inside, sharp-eyed for London buyers who might prevent my getting it. Antiques and period pieces are hard to come by now-a-days. But so far as I could see, the people were local. There was no one well dressed enough for London. It was a country crowd.

I looked around. The large room, drawing room I supposed, was quite crowded—with people and the strangest assortment of furniture I'd ever seen—of all kinds and periods from a Gothic bench through a wonderful Queen Anne chest to some pieces that must have come from Grand Rapids, U. S. A.

There was a table, complete with a pitcher of water, a glass and gavel for the auctioneer. Presently a red-faced, jolly-looking man took his place behind it, picked up the hammer and was just about to begin when a voice rang out, "Tell the truth before you sell, man. Don't let them buy the Devil's wares unknowing."

The speaker was a wizened old woman who looked like a witch. Her eyes were beadily bright and she spoke with authority.

The auctioneer held up his hand. He was obviously annoyed. "If you'd given me time I was going to tell my audience," he began with a lie, for I'm sure he'd had no intention of anything but the usual patter, "that this house has had the reputation of being haunted. That's why it's to be torn down,

but everyone in these parts knows that. The last owner—an artist—was supposed to have sold his soul to the devil so's he could live here. He was the last of the line and the pictures he painted were passing strange."

His audience was breathless now, and a little shivery, so he warmed up to his work by adding melodramatically, "These pictures have all been burnt, and the house has been exorcised with bell, book and candle by a priest. That includes the furnishings, ladies and gents, so you can buy with a free hand. Now, take this chest, genuine Queen Anne—" he began extolling the beauties of the chest I had singled out.

FROM then on everything went quickly to "ohs" and "ahs" from the "Ladies and Gents." Bidding was brisk and the auctioneer worked even faster than most of his kind. It was as though everyone was anxious to get away before sundown.

I didn't blame them. The place had an uncanny atmosphere despite the exorcising, or maybe that had only been in the auctioneer's mind. A good many things had been sold that morning, so there wasn't so much to fall under the gavel. I edged nearer the witch-like old woman. Towards the end she grinned at me. "You're wise, dearie, not to buy. The Masserys never had no luck—not since William the Conqueror's time they didn't, and their things shared their evil with them. Hain't you noticed things do? Reflect their owners, I mean."

I told her I hadn't, but now that she spoke of it I thought she was right. I admitted I wanted to buy the door.

She looked at me and shook her head. "It's been there a long time. It had best go with the house, miss. The door now. It's evil too. Maybe it was open and the priest's words were lost on it. Let be, girl, let be."

But I bought it just the same, for three pounds. No one else wanted it, and the auctioneer was anxious to be off. As his men tied it on the roof of my car I saw the old woman shaking her head in the background, but I had no premonitions. I was overjoyed to have found just what I had always craved for Little Tudor. I had been careful to get the old hinges along with the door, and once it was in place my home would be complete. I was so happy I hummed a little tune all the way home. Even the apple trees had lost their charm.

When I drove up in front of my barn I found Anne, Weston and Old Tim, the gardener, wondering where I'd gone. They were glad to welcome me back and delighted to see my find. "It's perfect," Weston announced.

"Just like you to get the very thing, miss," contributed the gardener.

Only Anne was silent. "Don't you like it?" I asked, not wanting there to be one fly in the ointment, or one word of dissent. I had already forgotten the old woman.

Anne looked at the door which Weston and old Tim were holding. "It's beautiful" she said reluctantly, "beautiful, but there seems something evil about it." She shuddered involuntarily.

I remembered the old woman then. I thought it strange that Anne, child as she was and miles away, should echo her words. But I spoke sharply. "It's old, all old things have seen evil, much of evil. Sometimes they can reflect what they've seen to sensitive minds."

She accepted my explanation with gravity, but she had the last word. "Yes, only—only it's as though this evil were alive."

Long before the twilight which is so lasting in England had ended, Weston and old Tim had the door in place.

"Evil or not, it looks magnificent," Weston said.

"Does it seem evil to you?" I asked.

"No." Weston was matter of fact. "What you said to Anne is true, though. It doesn't seem just like any door."

"It isn't. It's Tudor." We laughed at the pun. Then I told Weston about the old woman. He was quiet for a little, then he shrugged. "Maybe—but it's a fine old piece and just what we wanted. Let's forget the rest." That was how we left it.

The next morning Weston went up to

London in his own car—an ancient Daimler which, true to tradition, still ran like a song. I decided I'd walk to market. Aldringham wasn't far, the exercise would do me good. Anne, who had come over for breakfast, went with me. When we reached the gate we found the artist. He was lying spread-eagled on the road with a nasty bruise on his forehead. We knew he was an artist as his easel lay beside him and a box of paints with half its contents spilled was there, too. He was quite unconscious, evidently the victim of a hit and run driver.

I sent Anne to ring up the doctor and when she'd done that to return with old Tim. I felt the artist's pulse. In view of the tools of his trade there was no doubt of his profession. The beat under my fingers was faint but steady. I knew enough about fractures and concussions not to disturb him, so I began picking up the tubes of paint and putting them in his box. I was just aware of the doctor's car in the distance when I found him awake and regarding me.

"So you're better." I said.

He smiled ruefully. "I guess so. Is anything broken?"

"You should know." I told him and watched him flexing his arms and legs. Apparently there was nothing wrong with him. He grinned as the doctor came over. After a hasty examination the doctor said he was suffering from shock. He should be quiet for a day or so. The M.D. looked at me so I invited him to stay at Little Tudor. After all, he'd practically been injured on my ground. I really had no choice.

The doctor and old Tim helped him in. I put him in the guest room. He slept most of the day. The doctor had seen to that—but by night he was up and insisting on being no trouble. He finally came to dinner in a robe of Weston's.

HE LOOKED very young and handsome with blond, waving hair and deep blue eyes the color of turquoise. There was something open and ingenuous about him that made him most appealing. He was a charming talker too. Actually he was an artist only on the side. He had a regular job on a newspaper. Painting was his hobby and he was on a two weeks' vacation walking tour indulging it. He had only a few days left before he had to be back at Fleet Street. He showed me his sketch book. The things in it were good. He certainly knew how to draw and paint. Maybe some day he could illustrate a book of mine, I suggested.

He'd like that, he told me. By now Mrs. Tim had cleared the table and I was sitting by the fire. The artist, his name was Sandy Gordon, was moving up and down the big room. But he'd like to do something now to pay his way. How about painting that door? It looked so plain in the room.

I explained it was Tudor and all the carving was on the outside. Inside there was only the outline of four squares, and the wood wasn't as well polished, but I told him it would be out of character to paint it.

"No, it wouldn't." He'd been to some castle on his trip, pure Tudor, which had painted doors. It was even rumored Holbein had painted them. He'd do a good job. Please let him. Otherwise he could hardly accept my hospitality.

What could I do but weaken? When I came down next morning he was at work, Mrs. Tim hovering near enthusiastically. Later in the day Anne joined Mrs. Tim. "It's a lovely color, isn't it?" she asked, but she looked worried. When I asked her why, she mumbled something about "still evil."

Sandy didn't finish the back of the door until just before it was time for me to to take him to the train. Then he called me. "Do you like it?" He pointed to the door and stood back.

It was exquisite, a path outlined with a serpentine hedge of box leading off into a riot of roses. There were roses all along the side, across the top, bower-like. Mammoth roses, incredibly full blown. The colors were gorgeous. One could almost smell them.

"It's wonderful," I told him with enthusiasm, and it was. Then, because he was obviously waiting for more, I added, "It makes one want to find out where the path goes."

He turned away. "I shouldn't try to discover if I were you. It's a funny thing," he went on with a rush as though the words were forced out of him, "It isn't what I meant to do at all. I'd planned a Persian sort of thing, a princess in a flowery field with a prince on horseback. But when I started to paint it was as though another hand seized mine and this is the result. Those exotic colors aren't me at all. I usually deal in muted shades. These are stronger than I ordinarily use, and I never saw a rose like any of these. Oh, well, I suppose it's genius. Anyway, it's more vivid than anything I've ever done. Actually I'm quite proud of it."

"I shall be too." I told him. Then we rushed for the train. As it pulled out he leaned from the window and called, "Don't walk down that path." Then the train took him off to London.

WHEN I got back to Little Tudor, Anne was sitting, watching the door. I thought she was looking out for me, but such it developed was not the case. She was looking at Sandy's mural.

"Isn't it funny how those lovely roses take all the evil away, Aunt Tansy!" She always called me that. "I've never seen such pretty flowers and that path—where do you suppose it goes? I'd like to find out."

"You mustn't," I broke in sharply, remembering what Sandy had said.

She raised her brown eyes to my slate gray ones and laughed childishly, "As though I could! But I'm sure it's somewhere lovely—like the flowers. Perhaps Sandy knows."

"When he comes back to visit we'll ask him." I looked at the door myself and once again it seemed as though I could smell the roses and that they moved as though swept by some slight breeze.

Anne slipped her hand in mine. "The roses dance. I'm sure at the end of the path there's a carnival—a carnival of roses."

I wondered where she'd heard the word carnival. It was an odd word for a child to know. Perhaps she'd picked it up from

AND THERE'S NO TIME LIKE THE PRESENT TO WEAR A PAIR OF—

Carhartt Master Cloth Overalls

Bib overalls, Sanforized, with coats and work caps to match.

Lace back dungarees and waist overalls in long wearing Carhartt Master Cloth blue denim.

Round-Up Pants—Western style blue jeans—for work or play.

Three generations of the Carhartt family have been producing work clothes exclusively for sixty three years—your guarantee of top quality, roomier cut, more experienced tailoring and thriftier economies.

Whether it's our exclusively made rain repellent, extra heavy Brown Ducks for those tough, he-man jobs—blue denims for farm and shop—lace back dungarees and waist type overalls—shop coats—Western style blue jean Round-Up pants for the kids—you'll find a size and style to fit you . . . fit your pocket book . . . and fit the job, too. Quality and price considered you can't beat Carhartt's for washable, durable, on-the-job comfort.

HAMILTON CARHARTT OVERALL CO.
Detroit 16, Michigan
Carhartt Park, Irvine, Ky. Atlanta, Ga. Dallas, Texas

Sandy. "Such a lovely scent." She half whispered. "There were never such roses in this world." She wasn't really aware of what she was saying. It was curious that she seemed to have taken the words right out of my mind.

"Come on." I cried, sweeping her up. "Let's go for a walk." Instinctively we went out the side door leading onto the terrace. It was only then that I realized since I had brought home the new door no one, not even Weston, had used it.

THE next morning I was doing much better with Katherine Howard when suddenly Anne rushed into the room. "Surprise, surprise," she cried and dropped a yellow rose on my manuscript. It was the most perfect flower I have ever seen, much larger than most. It looked like a sequined star and the dew on it glistened like diamonds.

"Why, Anne, wherever did you get this? It looks like one of Sandy's roses."

She giggled, "It is! I found it lying in front of the door. Do you suppose it dropped off?"

"Don't be silly, Anne. You know that's impossible." I was sharp again, hating myself and the hurt look in her eyes. "Did you pick it in your mother's garden?"

"No rose is blooming yet." She told me gravely. "Not even in the conservatory. Besides, I've never seen a rose like this, not even at the Flower Show in London."

I knew she'd been taken for a treat last year, and I knew she was right. I had never seen such a rose either.

"Perhaps it comes from the end of the path," she suggested.

"Anne, you mustn't say such ridiculous things, or even think them. Probably Sandy sent the rose down from London. It's most likely a new kind he knew and that's why he drew them on the door. He told old Tim to put it there for me to find." I made my tones convincing, although I was remembering what Sandy had said about his painting. It wasn't like him and I never saw a rose like any of these. Maybe he had found one and sent it as I'd told Anne.

Anne didn't argue. She only looked hurt. "Don't you want it?" she asked, her lip quivering.

"Of course, dear. Let's put it in one of the best vases. I'll keep it here on my desk. It will inspire me." We made quite a thing of putting it in water and a ceremony of placing it on my desk.

It didn't inspire me. It worried me, for it lasted as no flower has any right to last. After a week it was as fresh as the day Anne brought it. Its yellow unfaded, dew still nestling at its heart. Anne worried me too. She was always sitting, looking at the door. When I asked her why she said she saw so much in the picture. "Some day I'll know what's at the end of the path. I have to." She was serious and I was frightened. I tried to discourage her visits, but it was no use. She was always there and now she was no longer interested in being with me. It was only the door that fascinated her. I was beginning to wish I'd never found it. I wished Weston would come home, but he was detained in London with a big cinema contract for my last book. "Even with the tax you're going to have some money to spend." he told me on the telephone.

I was too worried, and too afraid to care. Anne was changing before my vision, growing thin and pale. Her eyes, great pools of mystery, and her hands when they touched mine were like claws. I tried to talk to her mother, but she wouldn't take it seriously. "Just growing," was her comment on her child, "and working her imagination overtime. If it wasn't your door it would be something else. Don't worry."

But I couldn't help it. There came a rainy day and between the wind and storm I knew Anne wouldn't get over to Little Tudor. I made up my mind I'd watch the door myself, to see if I could discover what she saw. I suggested to Mrs. Tim that she take a nap, and when I knew she was settled I went into the long room. There, in front of the door, lay another rose. A red one this time, as beautiful and as unreal as the yellow one Anne had brought me. I knew now Sandy hadn't sent it. I'd written and asked him and he'd denied it

heartily. "Couldn't be a real rose like those products of my imagination—" he'd put on paper.

I took the red rose and put it in the vase with the yellow one, which was so strangely unwithered. I left it, glad to be free of the over-powering scent, but when I returned to the long room the perfume was still there, heavy as pure attar of roses, permeating the entire room. I sat in the deep chair facing the door where Anne always sat, with the sweet, cloying odor of the rose in my nostrils growing stronger every second. I watched the door. Once again the roses seemed to sway as though moved by some, to me, unfelt breeze. They seemed to be leaning towards me, beckoning me to come to the path, and the patch stretched endlessly and invitingly before me. What a picture it was. Genius, Sandy had said, it was more. It was a masterpiece, living as some pictures do.

I grew more and more enthralled. Now I could understand Anne's feelings. No wonder she liked to sit here with such sheer beauty before her, with endless, inviting vistas opening to her eyes. Carnival of roses —roses in riotous confusion, the epitome of beauty urging me to be a part of it.

The heady aroma of the roses' perfume must be affecting my brain. But I was like one compelled. I had to touch the flowers, to feel their velvety petals, to be a part of them. I was out of the chair without my knowledge, moving towards the door. The scent was stronger now, more alluring, and the path more inviting. I knew if I opened the door I could step onto the path and I knew, too, that I desired that more than anything in the world. I put my hand on the door handle. I turned it, opened the door. There was sunshine and roses outside, a riot of roses, red, pink, yellow and white rustling roses, moving towards me, touching my hands with velvet, my cheeks with dew, while the path sparkled like diamonds, and a bright, unnatural sunshine flooded everything like a spotlight.

I was dizzy with the redolence of the flowers. I took a step forward. I was on the threshold. Now, in another minute, I would be on the path. I would know such beauty as was not in the world.

Crashing through the sunlight and the roses came Sandy's voice, "Don't walk that path," and then suddenly the cloying scent was gone and instead I smelt that foul odor of decay that is part of yellow roses just before they begin to wilt.

Shocked, I drew back, though there were hands, strong, masculine hands, trying to pull me forward through the door. I exerted all my will and stepped back again into my long room. The path, the sun and the roses were gone. There was only wind and rain outside as the door slammed shut. I fell back into the chair and covered my face with my hands.

The door *was* evil. I knew now Anne was right. The old woman had known. She had been right too. Tomorrow I would have it removed. I could run no risks with Anne.

I remembered now what Sandy had said about it was as though someone else had seized his hands, and it wasn't his kind of painting. It was that of the last owner of the house. He had been an artist, the auctioneer had said so, who had sold his soul to the devil so he could stay in the house, and that his pictures had been burned. The roses were his pictures, not Sandy's—his. They would have to be destroyed, know the cleansing of fire. They were utterly evil, like the door, which, as the old woman had said, probably had been open and escaped the exorcising by the priest, so the evil spirit of the artist could cling to it and come to Little Tudor, bringing his evil with him. This was all strange and shattering to me, but I did not question it. I somehow knew it was so, knew too that I must cleanse the evil with fire, tomorrow. I could do nothing while the storm raged. Now I was shaken and unnerved. Work would be my best medicine. I went back to my study. I ignored the roses on my desk. I couldn't bear to touch them. I started to write. My pencil took no note of time, but suddenly I was aware of movement on my desk. I looked up. The sun was shining in my windows. I had been too absorbed in Katherine Howard's love scene

with the king to notice the storm was over, but that wasn't what had disturbed me. It was the roses. They were swaying and moving as though dancing with joy.

"Anne!" I cried, clasping my throat. The rain was over. She could have come to Little Tudor. I rushed into the long room. She was there, her hand on the door knob, just as mine had been a short time ago. "Anne," I called, "Anne, come back." There was all the fright and horror I felt in my voice.

It didn't stop her. She only called out over her shoulder "I can't stop, Tansy, I've got to find out where the path goes."

I rushed forward toward Anne and the moving roses but I was too far away. She swung the door open. I saw again the carnival of roses, the path, the sunshine so different from that visaged from my study window.

"Anne, Anne, no, no." I was screaming, but it was no use. She was over the threshold; when I reached the door it was shut, the painted roses on it rustled mockingly.

I opened the door. There was no sign of Anne, no path, no roses, no unnatural sunshine.

Anne was never seen again. She had found the path and vanished completely. Her disappearance made a nine days wonder in the neighborhood. I said I had last seen her go through the door. There was no use telling the rest. No one but I ever knew the truth—or what I thought was the truth.

The next day we burned the door. Old Tim and I. We chopped it up first, in small pieces, and what a bonfire it made!

As it burned wildly I heard, or thought I heard, two voices. One was a man's screaming with frustration, the other was Anne's. "Thank you, Tansy," was what she said. I like to think the fire freed her soul from Evil.

When the door was completely ashes and I got back to my study I looked for the roses. They were gone. Only around the vase were little seared petals that resembled the ashes of the door.

YOU'VE WAITED SEVEN YEARS FOR THIS BOOK!

"GARDEN OF FEAR"

A SELECTED GROUP OF FIVE TERRIFYING TALES

By ROBERT HOWARD and other favorite authors

After being practically unobtainable for seven years, this outstanding selection of weird and unusual stories is now available through a special arrangement by your READERS' SERVICE BOOK CLUB . . . and at a price you usually pay for just a magazine! We urge you to send for your copy now—immediately . . . because we know that our present supply will be gone within a very short time. Don't be disappointed—send the coupon below and 25 cents in coin today!

NOW ONLY 25¢ (WHILE SUPPLY LASTS)

CONTENTS

- THE MAN WITH THE HOUR GLASS By L. A. Eshbach . . . whose vivid writing brings the mysterious distant future to meet the present!
- CELEPHAIS By H. P. Lovecraft Did this weird city of Celephais really belong to the dead? One of Lovecraft's most astonishing tales!
- MARS COLONIZES By Miles J. Breuer "Most" the ghost-white invaders from a strange land!
- THE GOLDEN BOUGH By David H. Keller, M.D., A sinister tale of demon worship. A masterpiece!
- THE GARDEN OF FEAR By Robert Howard This story of a gruesome garden was chosen as the title story of this collection. This thrilling tale alone is worth more than the price of the book!

. . . And All YOURS for only 25¢ in coin sent TODAY!

You can't afford to miss this wonderful opportunity—20,000 THRILL-PACKED WORDS! Put 25¢ in coin (no stamps please) in an envelope along with this coupon filled in with your name and address . . and in a few days you'll have your copy of this book-length paper covered collection of weird and fantastic stories.

HURRY! Mail Coupon or Write TODAY!

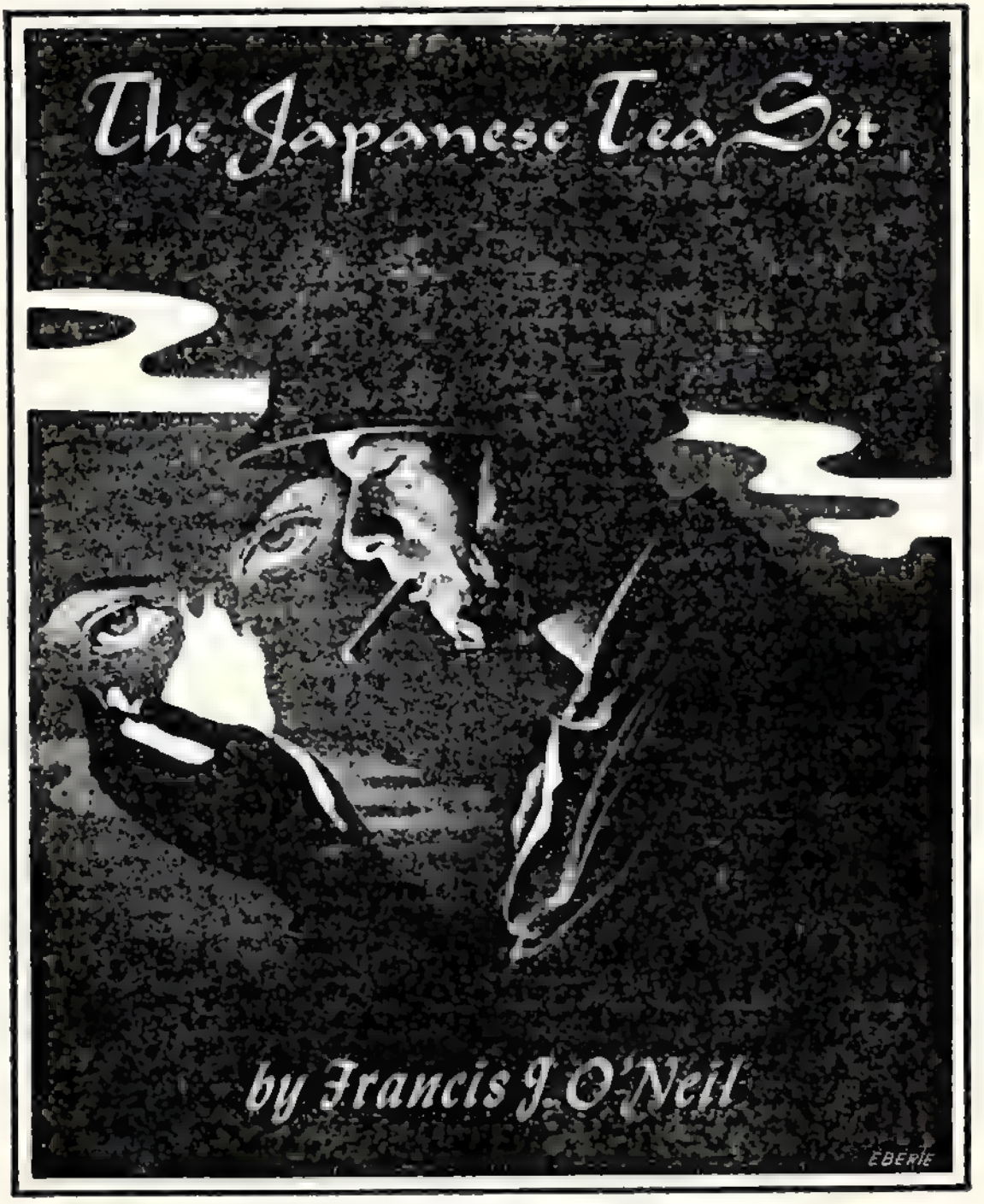
READERS' SERVICE BOOK CLUB, Dept. W-11,
119 E. San Fernando St., San Jose 13, Calif.

Here is my 25¢ RUSH MY COPY OF "THE GARDEN OF FEAR" by return mail!

NAME_____

ADDRESS_____

CITY_____ STATE_____



Chicoro was dead . . . dead. Yet her hand had come out of the fog and brushed across his cheek.

IT WAS at that moment that he became sickeningly aware of his approaching madness. With a wrench of almost physical pain, he felt the last faint vestiges of his sanity tearing loose and fleeing in abject terror into the shifting shadows gathered at the back of his mind.

At that moment, Lieutenant Joshua Fal-

Heading by Joseph Eberle

ter, United States Marines, felt the hand brush gently along his cheek, filling the whole of his quivering body with a strange and unearthly coldness.

A few minutes ago he'd been walking with swift intensity along the gray sidewalk of the *Ryokan Shimbashi,* completely unaware of the myriad piping cries of the Japanese vendors holding forth pewter and brass trinkets for his inspection. With a sort of desperate intensity he was recalling the address in his overcoat pocket. *Doctor Ato Taimai, 999 Ryokan Shimbashi, Tokyo,* the damp scrap of paper had told him.

It was all that was left, that address—the last thin sliver of salvation thrust between himself and an inexorable dissolution into madness and, finally, death.

Ever since leaving the air force base at Haneda that morning, Joshua had been questing frantically through the maze of misty streets that splayed out in mud-spattered confusion from the macadam spine of the *Ginza.* Finally, long after nightfall, he'd found *Ryokan Shimashi,* and then the house 999, sitting back from the sidewalk, its thin walls and small windows showing in the saffron splash of a streetlamp.

Looking up at the delicately etched numerals above the stained, monkey-pod door, Joshua had felt that spasm of hysterical elation, and he had said aloud, "Now, Chicoro, you vicious, sloe-eyed imp, we'll see if I live or die!"

Walking up to the door, he'd knocked loudly and stepped back to wait. Then it happened.

In that little pool of lemon light, with the fog drifting in gauze tendrils around him, a hand reached out of nowhere and drew a soft, smooth caress across his cheek.

Joshua felt a snap behind the frontal bone of his forehead, felt a kind of draining, warm wetness, as though a fat grape had burst amid the convolutions of his brain. Gripping himself hard he spun about.

Then he knew the madness was coming upon him swiftly, for Chicoro, his sweet-faced girl-*san,* had died six months ago, a suicide in Osaka miles to the south. Yet the hand that just touched him was Chicoro's.

It *was* Chicoro's—of that there could be no mistake. There could be no mistaking the incredible softness of flesh, the long slender fingers, the singular scent of some musky Oriental perfume. Countless times, sitting at the tiny bar in the officer's club at Itami, Chicoro's hand had made that same caress. Looking up at him, the elfin face naive as a flower petal, Chicoro had said, "Ah, Josh, I love you, love you," and the words had been a whisper, almost a sigh of pain. Six months ago. . . .

THERE was a soft sound behind Joshua. He whirled around. The monkey-pod door had opened and, in the dim light issuing from within, stood an elderly Japanese wearing a black Occidental business suit.

"Hai?" he asked softly. "May I do something for you?" His voice was a thin thread of sound. Controlling an impulse to look back over his shoulder, Joshua said, "You are Doctor Taimai?"

The old man nodded, his placid eyes, canted slightly in the fragile, brown face resting gently on Joshua. Surprisingly, he said, "A wise man once wrote that it is only fear itself of which we must be afraid, Lieutenant. Try to relax."

Doctor Taimai stepped back into the ante-way and made a gesture with his hand toward another door. Joshua entered and walked quickly across a deep-piled Oriental rug into a small room. He dropped into the lap of a leather chair beside a teakwood desk, and took his head in his hands as a sob shuddered up from deep inside him.

Closing the door, Doctor Taimai crossed to his chair and sat down in the cone of a single lamp that flooded the desk top. He watched Joshua weeping for a moment, then said, "You are gravely ill, my son. Even to the uninitiated that would be obvious."

"I had to come to you," Joshua said suddenly, leaning over to grasp the desk. "If you cannot help me I'm finished. I'll be doomed as surely as the Stateside wiseacres thought we were at Chosin Reservoir."

Joshua's palsied hand skittered across his

forehead as he mopped at the sweat. "In fact, it was at Hungnam, after the withdrawal from Chosin, that I heard of you. We'd run a herd of Chinese prisoners down with us, and among them was this Major Tao, a tank commander. He'd been to UCLA; majored in psychology; knew about Freud, Adler, Jung.

"I got to talking to him, as a man sometimes will, and I told him a little of my trouble. Oddly enough, he was fascinated. He insisted I come see you. He said that you were without question the best psychiatrist in the East."

Joshua's reddened eyes stared across at Doctor Taimai. He hesitated, then said, "He also claimed that despite your knowledge of modern psychiatry, you have not completely abandoned a belief in the occult, or, at least, in things beyond the reach of academic pigeon-holing. In other words, Doctor, you haven't that damned, deadly smugness toward the outre and unexplainable that earmarks the medical world. If that's right, chances are you won't laugh at me."

Doctor Taimai's eyes flicked up at Joshua. "Laughter is too expensive," he said, for me to indulge myself." Reaching into a drawer he took out a block of paper. "It is evident that you have experienced a severe fright, Lieutenant. Could you tell me of it now?"

"It's Chicoro," Joshua said and, though he fought it, a cold spasm ran through him.

"It's Chicoro," Doctor Taimai repeated. "Japanese girl?"

"Yes."

"So," Doctor Taimai said softly. "And this girl gave you such terror?"

"She's dead," Joshua said, his hands gripping hard at the desk. "She's dead, and she just touched me outside your door. Her hand came out of the fog, brushed across my cheek."

DOCTOR TAIMAI ran slender, sere fingers through his thinning hair, his lips pursed in thought.

Joshua took the look for one of disbelief. He said, "Yes, Doctor Taimai, I know. Such a statement relegates me to the ranks of the loony. No normal man wallows in conniption fits of this type.

Jumping up, Joshua paced the room. "You'd think I could laugh something as stupid and foolish as this right out of my mind. I'm a fairly rational man. I've seen it all from ouija boards to Haitian fetishes.

"But this thing is not to be shrugged off. There's the whole crux of this stinking business, the things that scare me: I can't stop thinking about what she said! I come awake at night and find my whole body sopping with sweat, my arms and legs trembling uncontrollably. I can't fight her any more; she's whipping me, pulling me down. Soon, very soon. . . ."

"Just a minute, Lieutenant," Doctor Taimai's soft voice cut in. "You are letting emotion become master. Let us be calm. Of what words do you speak? Where is the beginning of this thing?"

Joshua returned to his chair. He made a determined effort to control the chill spasms that chattered through him. "I met Chicoro at a dance in Osaka. She was unbelievably beautiful. Raven hair, clear skin, scarlet lips. She had a trick of tucking up her mouth in a way that got to you. I fell for her, hard."

Joshua rubbed his knees. "I had two months training before going into Korea, and I spent every spare minute with her. I was convinced I loved her."

Getting up, Joshua began to pace again. "And then, a week before I was to leave, something completely illogical happened. One of those things that make you shake your head. I ran into a nurse at the club, a tiny blonde kid from Indianapolis. I . . . I fell in love with her. Don't ask me why. Don't tell me about vacillation, about an unstable, immature mind. I was completely, irrevocably in love with Linda, and within the week we married."

"And Chicoro?" Doctor Taimai said.

"Yes, Chicoro." Joshua's smile was a leer of fear and pain. "After Linda came, I forgot all about Chicoro. It had been an infatuation—a blazing, peculiarly deep infatuation, I'll admit, but that was all. Un-

fortunately, it was more than that to Chicoro. Much more. She had fallen in love with me and had discarded all her old ties. I need not tell you about the social and moral dictum of the Orient. It is a strange thing to us Caucasians, but deadly serious to Easterners. Chicoro's intent to marry a white man had alienated her with her family, her friends. She'd become practically a pariah in Osaka."

Joshua paused in his pacing. "To sum up: I went to Chicoro when I finally realized how crudely I'd handled something very precious to her. When she learned of my abrupt marriage her senses seemed to leave her. If you have ever seen love and devotion change into bitter hatred, you will know what a frightening experience it is.

"Chicoro simply blew up. At first, she threatened to kill me. Later, she did away with herself, but before the suicide, just before I went to Pusan, she came to me once more. In a regular fury of passion she said that she would haunt me, that scalding searing hatred was far stronger than love, strong enough to fling aside the veil separating life from death. She would come back and stay right beside me, whisper thoughts down into my mind, little thoughts, drop by drop, that would wear away my patience, irritate me into self destruction as the only means of escaping her weird torture."

Joshua's voice rose, touching the edge of hysteria. "I thought at first it was the ranting of a demented woman, Doctor; just cheap prattle to goad me. But I was wrong. She's succeeding. Despite the gunfire on Korea, I could hear her tiny padding footsteps. In foxholes, on ridges, she was right there talking to me. I could hear her!"

"Wait. Wait." Doctor Taimai rose quickly from the chair, his eyes pinned on Joshua. "Easy, my son, please." He pulled a bell cord against the back wall. "We will have tea, Lieutenant. Tea is soothing." He turned as the door opened. A man, extremely old, but moving with the consummate grace of a dancer, came across the room.

"Naiko," the doctor said. "May we have tea. You'll use the Naratocki."

The old man frowned, then turned and left.

The doctor returned to his chair and smiled at Joshua. "Did you suspect, Lieutenant, that Naiko is blind? Completely. Yet he stumbles against nothing. Over the past thirty years he has developed a sort of animal sensitivity, a keen perception that is almost inhuman. Do you see how even the most terrifying tragedy can be turned into a triumph of courage?

"Why, Naiko is so well-adjusted, he even worries about such prosaic things as my Naratocki tea set. It is old china, long in my family, and the years have depleted it terribly. So few pieces left."

Doctor Taimai picked up the block of paper. "But, to return to you, Lieutenant, I believe you are suffering from a complex, a particularly severe and violent complex that is developing a realistic phobia in your mind. A complex is simply a group of ideas and feeling which have been wholly or partly repressed in the unconscious because of painful emotional associations. Just as a person, once burnt, fears fire, just as we unconsciously withdraw ourselves from painful stimuli of any kind, so does the mind attempt to withdraw its field of perception, or by deliberately opening avenues of escape, such as fantasies or daydreams.

"It is evident," Doctor Taimai went on, "that you are an intelligent, well-educated lad of good background. You are, too, sensitive, impressionable. Because of these, and because of an innate sense of decency, you have been unconsciously trying to repress your feeling of guilt concerning Chicoro. This attempt is rich soil in which grew a phobia. Your guilt has become a nebulous wraith shaped in the form of Chicoro. It is not Chicoro, but your own conscience that is haunting you, Lieutenant."

The door opened and Naiko came in. He placed a tray containing sandwiches and the gleaming, yellow pieces of a tea set on the desk. Doctor Taimai looked at the tray, then up at Naiko. He hesitated, then said, "*Aragato*. That will be all, Naiko."

Later, the tea finished and the block of paper scrawled with notes, Doctor Taimai

took Joshua to the door. "If you will try to remember that this is something mental, Lieutenant, a fearful little quirk of your subconscious, I think that Chicoro will become less and less of a menace. Come back to see me on Sunday. I want time to look over these notes."

He opened the door and the fog swirled close. "Do not forget, my son, that this trouble is just a phobia, a figment of your imagination cruelly trying to be master."

Returning to his office, Doctor Taimai pulled the bell cord. Naiko entered quietly.

"And, why was it, Naiko," the doctor asked, "that you did not use my Naratocki? It is true the young man would not understand the gesture, but I wanted to show my appreciation for his presenting such an interesting case."

Naiko's smile was a silent apology. "I regret causing you displeasure, Doctor-*san*, but there were only three of the Naratocki tea cups left and, unhappily, I dropped and broke one of these. I was reluctant to affront the lieutenant or his young girl-*san* by bringing in only two of the Naratocki, and having to use an ordinary, uncomplimentary cup for the third. I hope you understand, sir."

"Girl-*san?*" queried Doctor Taimai. "How did you know of the young man's girl-*san?* You don't see, and she was so *quiet!*"

"When one is blind, Doctor-*san*," replied the servitor, "other senses sharpen. So I hear what others fail to hear. The young man's girl-*san* sat much closer to him than we Japanese regard as proper, and was quite shameless in her profession of love. She kept saying, *"I love you and will never let you go! I love you and will never let you go!"* A Japanese girl should have pride. If the tea set had not broken I should still not have used the Naratocki, with all due respectful apologies, Doctor-*san*. This is understood?"

"It is understood, Naiko. Had I heard the young lady myself I should not have bidden you bring the Naratocki!"

OUTSIDE, Lieutenant Joshua Falter almost staggered, almost ran, from the doctor's office. Twice since leaving he had felt the hand of his late beloved, caressing his cheeks. Now something had been added that he could not understand, that made madness nearer, virtually upon him—a sound utterly *Japanese*. He heard it around every corner, from every open door; the tinkling small crash of breaking chinaware; as if exactly the same tea cup were being dropped countless times right behind him; as if the sound pursued him.

It did, with his knowledge of the Orient, indeed pursue him. A broken tea-cup had a certain meaning: it was the symbol of a cast-off bride, of an unmarried girl no longer a maiden, of a suicide; it meant Chicoro.

The hands touched his cheeks, there were two of them now, and they slid slowly, caressingly, down to his throat, started to tighten. His neck, his face, swelled with fright and the heavy darkness closed in around him as the sound of the breaking chinaware multiplied, weaved together into a crashing crescendo.

Fermentation

BY CURTIS W. CASEWIT

The jolly god in triumph comes,
Sound the trumpets!
Beat the drums!

DRYDEN

IT ALL started one morning when Orville Rausch came gasping into my laboratory, waving his tiny hands.

"I have it!" he yelled.

As chemical analyst at his winery I was, of course, quite interested, in what he might have. He was a tireless source of new ideas, of formidable advertising projects and endless schemes to beat and smash his competition. Rausch was a quaint mixture of crackpot and business wizard and sometimes quite admirable.

"What is it, sir?" I asked.

"Zerobnick's secret! I have it—we're going to bring it on the market first!"

Clem Zerobnick, *Excellos* Wineries, was Rausch's great rival. Lately he had become his great obsession. When Zerobnick dropped prices, Rausch had to follow; and when the other bought fifty inches of advertising, Rausch gobbled up a whole page.

"What secret?" I asked.

"It's a revolution in wine making! A fabulous discovery! From Mexico. They discovered a wild grape. It grows—"

"Excuse me," I said. "Grapes are somewhat rare in Mexico. I—"

"They were. But they aren't now," he raved. They have grafted these on cactus—they grow like wildfire."

"Cactus?" I said dubiously.

His receding chin went up and down, scraping against the wilted shirt collar.

I moved away from him. "You mean they're producing wine—"

Heading by Anthony Di Giannurio

"Yes, yes! Don't you understand? They built an experimental winery down there. Greatest wine specialist of South America in charge. Man named Vasco Rodriguez. I've contracted for his whole output. Pal Zerobnick won't get a drop of it. We'll knock 'em dead now."

I'm a scientist and a skeptic. "Where did you find out about this?"

"Rodriguez wrote me. But never mind this." He now did an impromptu dance on his thin little legs. "Labor is cheap down there, so I'm buying the wine for practically nothing. They pay half the freight. The cactus needs no cultivation nor—"

"Tell me," I said, picking up a Bunsen burner he'd knocked over. "Tell me: this wine from Mexico, how do we get it up here?"

"Tank cars!" His voice became smug. "The first one is already on the way."

"Oh?"

"There'll be hundreds more! Not like one or two a week from California! No, Eric! Hundreds of cars. The whole West will drink it. We'll ship it everywhere!"

WITH that he ran out of the room to return with an exotic looking, black decanter. A tiny ripple of excitement went through me when he pressed the cold bottle into my hands, a bottle with a neck like a cactus pear and a yellow label that read "Vino Opuntia."

"Look," I said, still doubtful. "Plants that mushroom up overnight should deserve some research. Fermentation rules don't always apply to them. If—"

He ignored me. "Vino Opuntia, eh? The Wine of cactus? Let's get a good name. You try!"

"I'm sorry."

"No imagination at all, Eric. Just like a chemist, no feeling for publicity."

He groped for a name, babbled half a dozen, probing, searching. It was magnificent to watch an idea forming in his mind, gathering, slowly, slowly and then all at once thundering into the room like an avalanche. "Opuntia," he whispered, 'opium—utiopia—I got it! *VINOPIA!*"

He handed me a corkscrew "Here goes Zerobnick's neck!"

I put the bottle between my knees, pulling with vigor. The cork sat tightly.

"Give it to me," he snapped.

And while he had his teeth clamped together, all tautness, energy and rivalry while he was pulling there, failing, pulling again, I thought of Zerobnick. I had never witnessed a more intense competition.

When the bottle finally came open Rausch's hands were sticky.

I took a file cover and marked in red pencil:

Vinopia.

I took a sheet and wrote in ink:

Disturbing characteristic No. 1: "Cork, unusually tight. Reason?"

Rausch had meanwhile grabbed a glass. His eyes were glinting, his body shaking with impatience. He poured a drop. It was the supreme moment. We found a wine that was heavy and green. Ceremoniously, Rausch sniffed, his pointed nose moving back and forth over the rim of the glass. He took a sip, smacking his tongue. "Terrific! That'll kill old Clem!"

At the same moment he gazed at me, bewildered.

A hundred green specks had appeared on my white coat.

I'm a skeptical man, and on occasion I have a temper.

"Did you spit on me?" I asked.

"I did not!" he sputtered indignantly. "You must've spilled it when you opened the bottle."

"I beg your pardon, sir. *You* opened the bottle! I'm sure I didn't—"

"Never mind," he muttered, staring at my white coat which looked as if a spray gun had been at work.

An embarrassed pause followed. We both glanced at the open bottle suspiciously.

"Anyway, make an analysis, at once!"

"Yes, sir!"

"And taste the wine too."

When he'd gone, I took my Vinopia file and marked on a sheet in ink:

Disturbing characteristic No. 2: "Green specks. Reason?"

I pencilled, tentatively: Excessive pressure? Possibly a fermentation ad infinitum?

Then I tasted the wine. It had a queer bouquet of concord mixed with zinfandel. The tartness was not unpleasant.

AS I went to my tasting equipment, the phone rang. I had just inserted the first drop of wine into the ebullioscope.

"Hello," I said, with annoyance.

"Eric? This is Clem Zerobnick. How would you like a job?"

I knew the fox had an ulterior motive. I could imagine his clean-shaven face grinning, his stubby hand running over the cropped hair.

"I've got a job," I said.

There was a pause. "I hear old Rausch has something up his sleeve?"

"His sleeve is loaded!"

"What with?"

I ignored the question.

"It's a secret, eh?" His voice was metallic. I waited.

"Listen, Eric. I'd like to know what's happening over there. And I like you. If you ever need a little extra cash—"

I hung up on him.

Uneasily I went back to the black bottle. After boiling a sample with the ebulliscope, I tested it with the ph—and hydrometers.

I was puzzled that I couldn't find anything disquieting. I copied the formula on a slip for Rausch and went to his office. His desk was as cluttered up as usual, his wall calendar two weeks behind, chairs and tables filled with labels and half-filled bottles.

He was talking to his advertising agent. "Frances Langford? Yes, sure. She's fine. Let her hold the glass in her left hand. Give her a good background: fireplace, burning logs. That sort of thing. Copy to the paper: Socialite Frances Langford, tasting Vinopia, a product of—"

He turned to me, hands over the mouthpiece. "Yes, Eric."

"I have the analysis," I said.

"Won't be long, Eric. And listen to this!"

He turned back to the agent. "You there? Good. Full page spread. Draw inside of a liquor store. People waiting. Lots of people. Vinopia on all the shelves. And this slogan:

"So elegant—
"So mellóquent—
"That's VINOPIA WINE for you!"
"Standing in line?
"For VINOPIA, anytime!"
"Cause VINOPIA is the finest,
"From California to the Rhine!"

He hung up and I gave him the slip. He read it. "Alcohol percentage: 21.5—malic acid: 0.001%—Tartaric acid: 0.0003%—acedetahyde: 0.0055%. Wonderful! Good figures. Nothing wrong."

"There's nothing wrong," I said. "For *now*. There could be plants, though, with a different kind of fermentation. And this cross-breed of cacti and grapes could—"

"Aw, let *me* do the worrying!" His eyes were darting nervously. "We've got brother Zerobnick just like that—" His hand closed into a fist as if he were holding a fly. "Yes, sir! Like that. Frances Langford in the society column, day after tomorrow. Drinking VINOPIA! People already standing in line and—"

I walked out of his office back through the sleepy warehouse, past the huge redwood vats. There were the two new ones, and their varnish glittered in the sunlight. These were for Vinopia. It was lunch hour. A deathlike silence hung over the filters, coolers, the capping machinery. Suddenly they looked like a sorcerer's implements.

Irritated, I had to spend the balance of the day in conference. Rausch was already launching his plan: invite every liquor store owner within three hundred miles. Telegrams were being sent out en masse. A sales manager held pep talks to his men. Rausch was everywhere, interrupting, organizing, briefing personnel, a vivacious hornet of a man.

Before going home that night, I went into his office once more. Again I objected, warning against rashness.

"Wait? Test it? Are you crazy? We're making history, man. History! The tank car

will be here. Tomorrow. Hundreds of people. We'll show 'em how the pumps work, the feeding machinery, and—"

"I hope you won't hold me responsible," I said. "Something may happen."

"What will happen will be bags of money, Eric. Think of the sales! A push-over! Sky high! Money! We'll swim in it."

He clutched an open decanter. "This is the thing people want. The wines of California? Forgotten! Muscatel? Port? Tokay? Things of the past! A blessing, that Vasco Rodriguez!"

THE next morning I drove back to the plant which is located at the city limits, with no other factories within several miles. Only telegraph poles, the broad highway and a blue sky. I had slept badly and at breakfast my wife handed me a clipping from the morning paper. My wife also is a conscientious person. I read:

"There will be an open house at the Rausch Wineries this morning, with refreshments being served. Most refreshing of all news, however, is the discovery of a new wine which Mr. Orville Rausch ably called Vinopia. He tells us that in years of research at his laboratories this fine beverage was perfected—"

And in the car, I heard the radio advertising. There were formidable drums, then the ear-splitting voice of a high pressure announcer, and afterwards, the mellow voices of a girl's chorus: "Stand in line? For Vinopia, anytime!"

I entered my lab with a feeling of premonition. I found the bottle on the same shelf as the night before.

But its shape had changed!

I reached for it, disbelieving. The black glass was cracked on one side; on the other, a blister-like formation had risen.

It was again difficult to get the cork out. My hands became sticky. Confused, I placed the bottle on the table. Suddenly, I saw it stir, ever so slightly. My heart was pounding. Was I seeing things?

As I subjected another sample to my test tubes, Griffith came in. Griffith looked after the bottling operations, took care of the casks, cases, conveyors. He was a flaxen-haired chap, his face all innocence.

He came closer and the bottle stirred again, sliding toward the edge of the table. My throat was tight. I grabbed Griffith's arm. "Did you see that?"

"What?"

"That bottle! It moved!"

Griffith looked at me philosophically. He didn't speak, but his face spoke for him.

"I saw it," I began to yell, "I saw it. It moved to the end of the table."

Griffith shook his head and then patted my back complacently.

"You need more sleep, professor!" And out he walked.

I felt rotten and alone then, and the symptoms I had witnessed crushed my mind.

I said to myself: If a small bottle of Vinopia gives us such trouble, what about a whole tankful?

Swallowing hard, I took the Vinopia file.

Disturbing characteristic No. 3:

Objects touched by the liquor will move. Reason?

The show must be stopped. Or there'll be a disaster.

I LEFT the lab in search of Rausch. When I crossed the plant I saw how much scrubbing had been done: the centrifugal pumps had been checked and the huge doors leading to the railway siding. The bottling and capping equipment and the conveyors had been greased and cleaned, and thousands of yellow labels stood ready in open boxes. But no Rausch.

He wasn't in his office, either. Griffith was there, talking to a dozen girls who had been hired for the special bottling operation. It was a field day for Griffith all right. He wore an extraordinary garment: all white, with a green V from his neck to his belt. "V" for Vinopia. And the girls also had new uniforms, likewise adorned with the "V" and the same wide sleeves.

I saw Rausch's secretary. "Did you see the boss?"

She looked up at me. She wore a round

clasp, with a green "V." "Nope, Eric. Haven't seen him all day."

I was frantic now because the automobiles of the retailers were already pulling up in front of the building. The sky was blue outside. My head felt like a tombstone. They were already strolling through the plant, staring at the vats and the ceiling, with Griffith amongst them, explaining eagerly. He noticed me. "What's eating you?" he asked.

"None of your business," I said. "Did you see Rausch?"

"There he is, professor."

I found him standing at the door which connected to the offices, talking to the liquor men. Wines were dispensed by the gallon around him and the place was bustling with men and women, drinking and gulping down sandwiches, and salesmen were busy, carrying—so to speak—mental order books.

At length I managed to get to Rausch, and tugged at his sleeve. He wore a double-breasted suit which was comically large for his emaciated body. "I have to talk to you," I said softly.

"Sorry," he said, turning away from me.

I kept on his toes. "It's vital."

He turned. "Darn it, Eric. Don't you see I'm busy now?"

"I do," I said. "But you'll be so busy soon that you'll be out of business." Despair made me bold. I didn't care.

"Keep your shirt on, man."

You may lose yours, I thought. "Could you come with me?" I said.

I took him into the lab and showed him the bottle.

For a moment, his hand followed the receding lines of his tiny chin. When he should have been excited he was perfectly calm. "So what?" he mused.

"*So what?* Look at it. Some lunatic reaction in the wine. It won't stop fermenting. You know that fermentation *has* to stop. Here it doesn't. The bottle is already half empty."

"You must've dropped it."

"Of course not. The alcohol percentage has increased. It's sixty percent now."

"Good! Forty percent more than I expected. We'll make 'em pay more!"

"Deposits," I said.

Deposits, or sediments are an evidence of foreign substances in wines. The dark glass may have been intentional, to conceal such sediment. "I insist we do more testing—"

"Out of the question," he shouted. "The tank car will be here any minute now." Through the glass wall he pointed to the crowds. "What about those, Eric?"

JUST then I saw Frances Langford stepping on the platform which had been placed in the middle of the plant, and Rausch stormed out of the lab toward her. A glass sparkled in her dainty hand, and she moved it back and forth over the heads of the people under her, until the confusion of voices broke and then ceased altogether. Her features were lovely, topped by blond hair that was boyishly cut; and her figure was appealing, as it gently swayed from side to side.

"So elegant—

"So melloquent," she recited and then the remainder of Rausch's verse. Someone took the glass from her hand, and she stepped down, the applause wild and Rausch's raspy voice now filling the room.

"Ladies! Gentlemen!" he shouted. "What you see here is sixty thousand square feet of efficiency. Examine, gentlemen! Scrutinize, ladies! These huge vats, for instance—in a few moments you'll see them filled with Vinopia!"

He went on to explain what Vinopia was and where it came from.

"In a few more minutes, our special tank-cars will pull into our own railway siding. The doors are open! Look!"

The timing was perfect.

From afar came the droning of an engine, at first scarcely audible. A moment later, there was complete silence in the building. A locomotive stopped, puffing. The liquid in the car gave a bubbling sound as it slapped the metal.

When Griffith signalled it into its precise location, all eyes followed him.

"And now you'll see our latest innovation! A plastic hose!"

Griffith dragged the hose and inserted it into the body of the car. Then he climbed the small ladder and began to turn the outlet valve.

"You're now living a moment of history! Yes, a decade in wine making!" Rausch fingered his tie. The bony head suddenly appeared strong and forceful. His eyes hung on every one of Griffith's movements. He watched him climb down to attach the hose to the pumps. It was oppressively quiet.

THE green liquid started to surge through the hose, splashing into the massive empty vats. The pumps began to hammer rhythmically and there were the hissing sounds of the liquid as it hit the bottom of the vats.

Then I caught my breath.

With the first gush of wine, a thin, sticky vapor began to fill the room. The spectators, the machinery, everything delicately changed color. I heard a murmur of astonished voices.

Rausch ignored the baffling phenomenon. "The first Vinopia runs into these vats. Soon you'll see our pasteurizing equipment at work. And the filters, gentlemen! From there into the bottles!"

He had hardly spoken when the vats gave out a first peculiar sound. It was a remote vibration, followed by a noise as if a dozen woodpeckers were busy inside. The wood started to groan slightly, then to croak. Varnish peeled off. Green vapor thickened to fog and a drizzle settled over the audience. Then there came grunts, snarls and finally a roar: The first crack appeared in the wood. An unseen force seemed to push it from the inside. "Fermentation," I thought, observing a churning froth of wine running through the seams. An acid fragrance—not entirely unpleasant—filled my nostrils.

Frances Langford screamed before I even saw the metal rings flex and then burst. The wood came open with a deafening blast which echoed from wall to wall and that was immediately followed by a metal clang. The double doors of the factory had rolled shut. At this point, the room had turned into bedlam. I scrambled to the doors, found the hoses neatly severed, still wriggling like snakes. I kicked the ends aside, pushing the door handle. It was stuck. The door was glued into the wall as firmly as the cork into the bottle. We were trapped.

Rausch who had been listening grimly on his platform now leaped down: "Griffith! The pumps!" I saw Griffith make for the first pump and hug the valve frantically.

"It doesn't close!"

"Then try the safety stem!" Rausch stumbled to the pump himself. So did I. We pulled at the valves, wine curling over the ground around us, and the odor choking us. The valve was locked. Tight. *Like the cork!*

I elbowed my way toward the office doors. Panic stricken crowds surrounding me, faces flushed with terror, exclamations.

"Hey! What's goin' on?"

"My new hat!"

"Sue 'em!"

"Stand in line—haw haw!"

My head was sickeningly heavy. My body was lead. Still, I lunged against the two office doors, one after the other. They held. Locked. Tight.

And then I made my way back through the room, a room where every inch was green now: green the faces, arms, legs, the clothing, bricks.

Finally, as I struggled back to the lab, and listened and stared through my glass partition, hearing still more screams, screams edged with laughter, I saw the most incredible sight.

The vats were leaving their cement foundations. Till this day I don't understand it. Uprooted, the huge containers glided toward the ceiling, an inch, four inches, a yard—how do I know?—and a river of wine followed their path. And the sprinkler system suddenly began working. People ran from wall to wall, diving under the convevor belts. Rausch under his platform.

And then—I'm a skeptical man—came the sudden vision of a man strutting, fast, fast toward my sanctuary. He had an extraordinary gait: arms swinging, head darting right and left, his long hand holding a jar with the green liquid he'd scooped up.

The door was open all at once and he entered, ignoring me completely. His face was contorted in a grin, eyebrows shooting up and down. He was using my instruments now—I've never seen anyone work that fast with an ebullioscope and a hydrometer—and mumbling little words, which I half heard. "Ah—esselent—splengdid—ah—good—fine formula—ah—gradiose—"

"Pardon me," I said. "Who are you?"

He went on working, at his incredible speed, as he said. "Vasco Rodriguez, technicaal advissur. Ciudad Vino. Mexico."

His head went up and down as he spoke. I moved nearer. He was as tall as myself.

And then I blinked. I saw his head. *It was crowned by a circle of grapes!*

I was astonished that my eyes and brain were still functioning. I was groggy but something of a scientist must have still been left in me because I succeeded in finding a jar with caffein powder, opening it, and swallowing a handful. It tasted like gall. And my companion, seeing the powder, disappeared as fast as he had come. Suddenly I realized that it had been Bacchus himself. Bacchus—the God of wine—behind the whole project, under a false name, doing his business in a perverse fashion.

Thereafter things happened fast.

The phone came into focus and I took it out of its cradle, asking for the fire department.

As I spoke, the big doors of the plant had been opened—it is still not clear by whom—and I saw the unbelievable melee dissolving, the crowds charging from their prison toward their automobiles.

Later, I found Rausch creeping out from underneath the platform.

"E-Eric." His tongue was lolling.

"Where did you find out about this wine?" I cried.

"Ne—never mind!" he said, drunkenly.

I shook his green carcass. For a moment I thought his bones might come apart.

"Tell me, or I'll drown you in your Vinopia!" There was still some on the ground. Patches of it.

"I—I stole the secret," he babbled. "Zerobnick said something about it. Had someone break into his desk."

I shook him some more.

"Got the address that way. Wired Rodriguez before Zerobnick could place an order!"

"Imbecile," I shouted. "Don't you see what Zerobnick has done to you?"

He almost became sober. "How's that?"

"Zerobnick made the experiments up here. He discovered the wine's potency and—"

"Hey, Eric! I got it. We'll make money out of it. Airplanes will run on Vinopia and everything!"

"Never!"

"But why?"

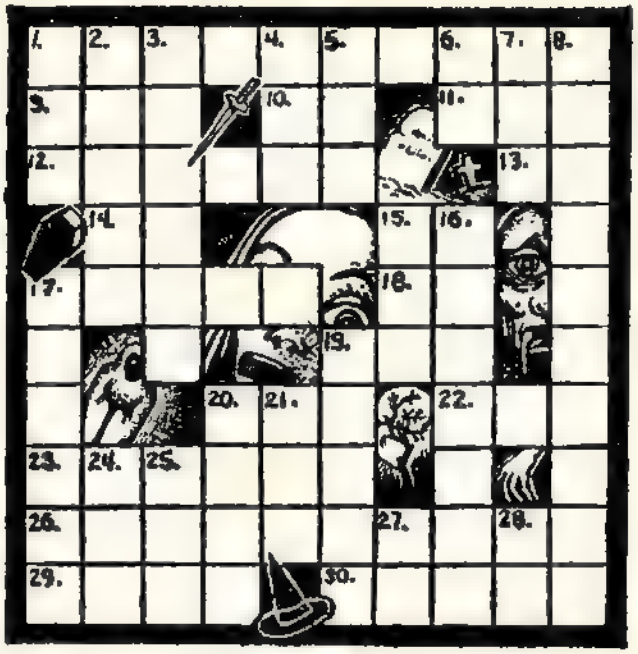
I told him that the wine ferments constantly, vaporizing almost at once. And while I spoke to him, still holding him by his collar, I suddenly saw Zerobnick's head popping through the door. It happened only within a fleeting second and by the time I could run toward the door and let go of Rausch, the pair of eyes had already disappeared, eyes examining the damage.

"Look, Eric," Rausch said. "We'll open up again! And you—you'll be on the ground floor!"

"I leave the honor to you." I dropped him and he fell like a bag of asparagus. When I ran out beyond the door, sirens were screaming, two, three, four times, and quite clearly I noticed the fire trucks pulling up. Quite clearly, too, way down the road I saw a patrol car in pursuit of a speeding automobile.

It was Zerobnick's. He was a cautious man who never drove more than thirty miles per hour near the city. But this time he did. Because next to him sat none other than the fellow with the wine-leaves and grapes on his head. And both men were in a great hurry.

Weird Crossword



Across

1. TO BEHEAD
9. TOWN IN SCOTLAND
10. UP TO
11. TO FLOG
12. PRODUCES
13. RIGHT (ABBR.)
14. THAT IS (L.)
15. WHETHER
17. HEADQUARTERS
18. OR (FR.)
19. APOLLO
20. EYES REACTION TO *Weird Tales*
22. TREE
23. UNSOUND
26. IRISH FAIRY
29. SMART BLOW
30. DIVIDE

Down

1. LITTLE BIT
2. DEPARTMENT IN *Weird Tales*
3. CRAWLY
4. SOFTEN
5. POSSESSIVE CASE ENDING
6. SIAMESE COIN
7. SEAMAN
8. BURIAL
15. I OWE YOU
16. INTERMENT
17. FIENDS
19. SPECTACLES
20. BASIC IDEA
21. SINGLE
24. NOVEL
25. SPRING
27. HORSE-POWER
28. AS BELOW (L.)

Solution is on page 94

The Chapel of Mystic Horror

Heading by Joseph Howard Krucher

By Seabury Quinn

I

THE wind was blowing half a gale and little spits of sudden snow were whirling through the gray November twilight as we alighted from the accommodation train and looked expectantly up and down the uncovered way-station platform. "Seasonable weather for Thanksgiving," I murmured, setting my face against the howling blast and making for the glowing disk of the station-master's light.

"*Barbe d'un pelican*, yes!" assented Jules de Grandin, sinking his chin an inch or so lower in the fur collar of his overcoat. "A polar bear might give thanks for a warm fireside on such a night!"

"Trowbridge—I say there—Trowbridge!" a voice hailed from the lee side of the little red-brick depot as my friend Tandy Van Riper stepped forward, waving a welcoming hand. "This way, old-timer; the car's waiting—so's dinner.

"Glad to meet you, Dr. de Grandin," he acknowledged as I presented the little Frenchman; "it was mighty good of you to come out with Trowbridge and help us light the hearth fires at the Cloisters."

"Ah, then it is a new house that you have, Monsieur?" de Grandin asked as he dropped into a seat in Van Riper's luxurious roadster and tucked the bearskin rug snugly about his knees.

"Well, yes and no," our host replied. "The house has been up—in America—for something like eight years, I believe, but it's new to us. We've been in residence just a little over a month, and we're giving a regular old-fashioned Thanksgiving party by way of housewarming."

"U'm," the Frenchman nodded thoughtfully. "Your pardon, Monsieur, it is perhaps that I do not speak the American well, but did you not say the new house had been up in this country for only eight years? I fear I do not apprehend. Is it that the house stood elsewhere before being erected here?"

"Precisely," Van Riper agreed with a laugh. "The Cloisters were built or rebuilt, I suppose you'd say—by Miles Batterman shortly after the close of the World War. Batterman made a potful of money during the war, and a lot more in lucky speculations between the Armistice and the Treaty of Versailles. I reckon he didn't know just what to do with it all, so he blew in a couple of hundred thousand on an old Cyprian villa, had it taken down stone by stone, shipped over here, and re-erected. The building was a sort of remodeled monastery, I believe, and took Batterman's eye while he was cruising about the Mediterranean in '20. He went to a lot of trouble having it moved here and put up, and everything about the place is exactly as it was in Cyprus, except the heating and plumbing, which he added as a sort of afterthought. Quaint idea, wasn't it?"

"Decidedly," the Frenchman agreed. "And this Monsieur Batterman, did he so soon tire of his expensive toy?"

"Humph, not exactly. I got it from the administrators. I couldn't have afforded to pay a quarter the price Batterman spent on the place, let alone give him a profit on the transaction, but the fact is the old boy dropped off suddenly a year or so ago—so did his wife and daughter. The doctors said they died from eating toadstools by mistake for mushrooms. Whatever the cause was, the whole family died in a single night and the property would have gone to the State by escheat if the lawyers hadn't dug up some ninety-second cousins in Omaha. We bought the house at public auction for about a tenth its value, and I'm figuring on holding it for

. . . if this house be harmless, my friend, then
prussic acid is a healthful drink . . .

a while. It'll be novel, living in a place the Knights Templar once occupied, eh?"

"Very novel—very novel, indeed, Monsieur," de Grandin replied in a queer, flat voice. "You say the Knights of the Temple once occupied this house?"

"So they tell me—some of their old furniture's still in it."

De Grandin made an odd sound in his throat, and I turned quickly to look at him, but his face was as set and expressionless as the features of a Japanese Buddha, and if the half-smothered exclamation had been meant for conversation, he had evidently thought better of it, for he sat in stony silence during the rest of the drive.

THE snow squalls had stopped by the time we drew up at the house, but the wind had increased in velocity, and in the zenith we could see the gibbous moon buffeted about in a surf of windblown clouds. Against the background of the winter sky the irregular outline of the Cloisters loomed in a forbidding silhouette. It was a high, rambling pile of gray masonry in which the characteristics of Romanesque, Gothic and Byzantine architecture were oddly blended. The walls were strengthened by a series of buttresses, crenelated with battlements and punctuated here and there with small, cylindrical watch-towers; the windows were mere slits between the great stones, and the massive entrance-way seemed fitted for a portcullis, yet a great, hemispherical dome rose from the center of the building, and a wide, shallow portico with graceful, fluted columns topped by Doric capitals stood before the gateway.

Cocktail hour had just struck as we passed through the wide entrance to the main hall, and a party of sleek-haired gentlemen and ladies in fashionably scanty attire were gathered before the cavernous fireplace, chatting and laughing as they imbibed the appetite whetting amber drinks.

It was an enormous apartment, that hall, clear fifty feet from tiled floor to vaulted ceiling, and the darkness was scarcely more than stained by the flickering glow of blazing logs in the fireplace and the yellow beams of the tall, ecclesiastical candles which stood, singly, in high, wrought-iron standards at intervals along the walls. Draped down the bare stone sides of the hall hung a pair of prodigious tapestries, companion pieces, I thought, depicting particularly gory battle scenes, and I caught a fugitive glimpse of a black-armored knight with a cross-emblazoned surtout hacking the turbaned head from a saracen, and the tag end of the Latin legend beneath—"ad Majorem Dei Gloriam."

Piloted by our host we mounted the wide, balustraded staircase to the second of three balconies which ran round three sides of the long hall, found the big, barnlike room assigned us, changed quickly to dinner clothes, and joined the other guests in time to file through a high archway to the oak-paneled apartment where dinner was served by candle-light on a long refectory table set with the richest silver and most opulent linen I had ever seen.

Greatly to his chagrin de Grandin drew a kittenish, elderly spinster with gleaming and palpably false dentition. I was paired off with a Miss O'Shane, a tall, tawny-haired girl with tapering, statuesque limbs and long, smooth-jointed fingers, milk-white skin of the pure-bred Celt and smoldering, rebellious eyes of indeterminate color.

During the soup and fish courses she was taciturn to the point of churlishness, responding to my attempts at conversation with curt, unisyllabic replies, but as the claret glasses were filled for the roast, she turned her strange, half-resentful gaze directly on me and demanded: "Dr. Trowbridge, what do you think of this house?"

"Why—er," I temporized, scarcely knowing what to reply, "it seems rather gorgeous, but—"

"Yes," she interrupted as I paused at a loss for an exact expression, "but what?"

"Well, rather depressing—too massive and mediaeval for present-day people, if you get what I mean."

"I do," she nodded almost angrily. "I most certainly do. It's beastly. I'm a painter—a painter of sorts," she hurried on as my eyes opened in astonishment at her vehemence—"and I brought along some gear to

work with between times during the party. Van told me this is liberty hall, and I could do exactly as I pleased, and gave me a big room on the north side for a workshop. I've a commission I've simply got to finish in two weeks, and I began some preliminary sketches yesterday, but—" She paused taking a sip of burgundy and looking at me from the corners of her long, brooding eyes as though speculating whether or not to take me further into her confidence.

"Yes?" I prompted, assuming an air of interest.

"It's no go. Do you remember the Red King in Through the Looking Glass?"

"The Red King?" I echoed. "I'm afraid I don't, quite."

"Don't you remember how Alice took the end of his pencil in her hand when he was attempting to enter a note in his diary and made him write, 'The White Knight is sliding down the poker. He balances very badly'?"

I must have looked my bewilderment, for she laughed aloud, a deep, gurgling laugh in keeping with her rich, contralto speaking voice. "Oh, I'm not a psychopathic case—I hope," she assured me, "but I'm certainly in a position to sympathize with the poor king. It's a Christmas card I'm doing—a nice, frosty, sugar-sweet Christmas card—and I'm supposed to have a Noel scene with oxen and asses and sheep standing around the manager of a chubby little naked boy, you know—quite the conventional sort of thing." She paused again and refreshed herself with a sip of wine, and I noticed that her strong, white-fingered hand trembled as she raised the glass to her lips.

My professional interest was roused. The girl was a splendid, vital animal, lean and strong as Artemis, and the pallor of her pale skin was natural, not unhealthy; yet it required no special training to see she labored under an almost crushing burden of suppressed nervousness.

"Won't it work out?" I asked soothingly.

"No!" her reply was almost explosive. "No, it won't! I can block in the interior, all right, though it doesn't look much like a stable; but when it comes to the figures, something outside me—behind me, like Alice behind the Red King, you know, and just as invisible—seems to snatch the end of my charcoal and guide it. I keep drawing—"

Another pause broke her recital.

"Drawing what, if you please, Mademoiselle?" De Grandin turned from his partner who was in the midst of recounting a risque anecdote and leaned forward, his narrow eyebrows elevated in twin arches, his little, round blue eyes fixed and unwinking in a direct, questioning stare.

The girl started at his query. "Oh, all manner of things," she began, then broke off with a sharp, half-hysterical laugh. "Just what the Red King said when his pencil wouldn't work!" she shrilled.

For a moment I thought the little Frenchman would strike her, so fierce was the uncompromising gaze he bent on her; then: "Ah, bah, let us not think too much of fairy-tales, pleasant or grim, if you please, Mademoiselle," he returned. "After dinner, if you will be so good, Dr. Trowbridge and I shall do ourselves the honor of inspecting these so mysterious self-dictated drawings of yours. Until then, let us consider this excellent food which the good Monsieur Van Riper has provided for us." Abruptly he turned to his neglected partner. "Yes, Mademoiselle," he murmured in his deferential, flattering manner, "and then the bishop said to the rector—?"

II

DINNER completed, we trooped into the high, balconied hall for coffee, tobacco and liqueurs. A radio, artfully disguised as a mediaeval Flemish console, squawked jazz with a sputtering obbligato of static, and some of the guests danced, while the rest gathered at the rim of the pool of firelight and talked in muted voices. Somehow, the great stone house seemed to discourage frivolity by the sheer weight of its antiquity.

"Trowbridge, my friend," de Grandin whispered almost fiercely in my ear as he plucked me by the sleeve, "Mademoiselle O'Shane awaits our pleasure. Come, let us go to her studio at once before old Mere

l'Oie tells me another of her so detestable stories of unvirtuous clergymen!"

Grinning as I wondered how the little Frenchman's late dinner partner would have enjoyed hearing herself referred to as Mother Goose, I followed him up the first flight of stairs, crossed the lower balcony and ascended a second stairway, narrow and steeper than the first, to the upper gallery where Miss O'Shane waited before the heavily carved door of a great, cavelike room paneled from flagstone floor to beamed ceiling with age-blackened oak wainscot. Candles seemed the only mode of illumination available in the house, and our hostess had lighted half a dozen tapers which stood so that their luminance fell directly on an oblong of eggshell bristol board anchored to her easel by thumbtacks.

"Now, here's what I started to do," she began, indicating the sketch with a long, beautifully manicured forefinger. "This was supposed to be the inside of the stable at Bethlehem, and—oh?" The short, half-choked exclamation, uttered with a puzzled, questioning rising inflection, cut short her sentence, and she stared at her handiwork as though it were something she had never seen before.

Leaning forward, I examined the embryonic picture curiously. As she had said at dinner, the interior, rough and elementary as it was, did not resemble a stable. Crude and rough it undoubtedly was, but with a rudeness unlike that of a barn. Cubic, rough-hewn stones composed the walls, and the vaulting of the concamerated roof was supported by a series of converging arches with piers based on blocks of oddly carved stone representing wide, naked feet, toes forward, standing on the crowns of hideous, gargoylish heads with half-human, half-reptilian faces which leered hellishly in mingled torment and rage beneath the pressure. In the middle foreground was a raised rectangular object which reminded me of a flat-topped sarcophagus, and beside it, slightly to the rear, there loomed the faint, spectral outline of a sinister, cowled figure with menacing, upraised hand, while in the lower foreground crouched, or rather groveled, a second figure, a long, boldly sketched female form with outstretched supplicating hands and face concealed by a cascade of downward-sweeping hair. Back of the hooded, monkish form were faint outlines of what had apparently first been meant to represent domestic animals, but I could see where later, heavier pencil strokes had changed them into human shapes resembling the cowled and hooded figure.

I shuddered involuntarily as I turned from the drawing, for not only in half-completed line and suggestive curve, but also in the intangible spirit of the thing was the suggestion of something bestial and unhallowed. Somehow, the thing seemed to suggest something revolting, something pregnant with the disgusting incongruity of a ribald song bawled in church when the Kyrie should be sung, or of rose-water sprinkled on putrefying offal.

De Grandin's slender dark brown eyebrows elevated till they almost met the shoreline of his sleeky combed fair hair, and the waxed points of his diminutive blond mustache reared upward like a pair of horns as he pursed his thin lips, but he made no verbal comment.

Not so Miss O'Shane. As though a sudden draft of air had blown through the room, she shivered, and I could see the horror with which she stared, wide-eyed, at her own creation. "It wasn't like that!" she exclaimed in a thin, rasping whisper like the ghost of a scream. "I didn't do that!"

"Eh, how do you say, Mademoiselle?" de Grandin challenged, regarding her with his unwinking cat-stare. "You would have us to understand that—"

"Yes!" She still spoke in a sort of awed, wondering whisper. "I didn't draw it that way! I blocked in the interior and made it of stone, for I was pretty sure the Holy Land stables were masonry, but I didn't draw those beastly arch-supports! They were just plain blocks of stone when I made them. I did put in the arches—not that I wanted to, but because I felt compelled to do it, but this—this is all different!" Her words trailed off till we could scarcely catch them, not because of lowered tone, but be-

cause they came higher, thinner, with each syllable. Stark, unreasoning terror had her by the throat, and it was with the utmost difficulty that she managed to breathe.

"H'm," de Grandin tweaked the pointed ends of his mustache. "Let us recapitulate, if you please, Mademoiselle: Yesterday and today you worked on this sketch? Yes? You drew what you conceived to be a Jewish stable in the days of Caesar Augustus—and what else, if you recall?"

"Just the stable and the bare outlines of the manger, then a half-completed figure which was to have been Joseph, and the faintest outlines of the animals and a kneeling figure before the cradle—I hadn't determined whether it would be male or female, or whether it would be full-draped or not, for I wasn't sure whether I'd have the Magi or the shepherds or just some of the village folk adoring the Infant, you see. I gave up working about four this afternoon, because the light was beginning to fail and because—"

"Eh bien, because of what, if you please, Mademoiselle?" the Frenchman prompted sharply as the girl dropped her recital.

"Because there seemed to be an actual physical opposition to my work—almost as if an invisible hand were gently but insistently forcing my pencil to draw things I hadn't conceived—things I was afraid to draw! Now, do you think I'm crazy?"

She paused again, breathing audibly through slightly parted lips, and I could see the swelling of her throat as she swallowed convulsively once or twice.

Ignoring her question, the little Frenchman regarded her thoughtfully a moment, then examined the drawing once more. "This who was to have been the good Saint Joseph, now," he asked softly, "was he robed after this fashion when you limned him?"

"No, I'd only roughed out the body. He had no face when I quit work."

"U'm, Mademoiselle, he is still without a face," de Grandin replied.

"Yes, but there's a place for his face in the opening of his hood, and if you look closely you can almost see his features—his eyes, especially. I can feel them on me, and they're not good. They're bad, wicked, cruel—like a snake's or a devil's. See, he's robed like a monk; I didn't draw him that way!"

De Grandin took up one of the candelabra and held it close to the picture, scanning the obscene thing with an unhurried, critical stare, then turned to us with a half-impatient shrug. "Tenez, my friends," he remarked, "I fear we make ourselves most wretchedly unhappy over a matter of small moment. Let us join the others."

III

MIDNIGHT had struck and de Grandin and I had managed to lose something like thirty dollars at the bridge tables before the company broke up for the evening.

"Do you really think that poor O'Shane girl is a little off her rocker?" I asked as we made ready for bed.

"I doubt it," he replied, as he fastened the sash of his pale lavender pajama jacket with a nervous tug; "indeed, I am inclined to believe all that she told us—and something more."

"You think it possible she could have been in a sort of day-dream while she drew those awful things, thinking all the while she was drawing a Christmas card?" I asked incredulously.

"Ah bah," he returned, as he kicked off his purple lizardskin slippers and leaped into bed, "what matters it what we think? Unless I am more mistaken than I think, we shall know with certitude before very long." And turning his back upon me, he dropped off to sleep.

I might have slept an hour, perhaps only a few minutes, when the sharp impact of an elbow against my ribs aroused me. "Eh?" I demanded, sitting up in bed and rubbing my eyes sleepily.

"Trowbridge, my friend," de Grandin's sharp whisper came through the darkness, "listen! Do you hear it?"

"Huh?" I responded, but:

"Ps-s-st!" he shut me off with a minatory hiss, and I held my peace, straining my ears through the chill November night.

At first I heard nothing but the skirling of the wind-fiends racing past the turreted walls, and the occasional creak of a rusty hinge as some door or shutter swung loose from its fastenings; then, very faint and far-away seeming, but growing in clarity as my ears became attuned to it, I caught the subdued notes of a piano played very softly.

"Come!" de Grandin breathed, slipping from the bed and donning a mauve-silk gown.

Obeying his summons, I rose and followed him on tiptoe across the balcony and down the stairs. As we descended, the music became clearer, more distinct. Someone was in the music room, touching the keys of the big grand piano with a delicate harpsichord touch. Liebestraum the composition was, and the gently struck notes fell, one after another, like drops of limpid water dripping from a moss-covered ledge into a quiet woodland pool.

"Why, it's exquisite," I began, but de Grandin's upraised hand cut short my commendation as he motioned me forward.

Seated before the piano was Dunroe O'Shane, her long, ivory fingers flitting over the ivory keys, her loosened tawny hair flowing over her uncovered white shoulders like molten bronze. From gently swelling breast to curving instep she was draped in a clinging shift of black-silk tissue which revealed the gracious curves of her pale body.

As we paused at the doorway the dulcet German air came to an abrupt ending, the girl's fingers began weaving sinuous patterns over the keys, as though she would conjure up some nether-world spirit from their pallid smoothness, and the room was suddenly filled with a libidinous, macabre theme in B minor, beautiful and seductive, but at the same time revolting. Swaying gently to the rhythm of the frenetic music, she turned her face toward us, and I saw her eyes were closed, long lashes sweeping against white cheeks, pale fine-veined lids calmly lowered.

"Why," I exclaimed softly, "why, de Grandin, she's asleep, she's—"

A quick movement of his hand stayed my words, as he stole softly across the rug-strewn floor, bent forward till his face was but a few inches from hers, and stared intently into veiled eyes. I could see the small blue veins in his temples swell and throb, and muscles of his throat bunch and contract with the physical effort he made to project his will into her consciousness. His thin, firm lips moved, forming soundless words, and one of his small, white hands rose slowly, finger-tips together, as though reeling thread from an invisible skein, paused a moment before her face, then moved slowly back, with a gliding, stroking motion.

Gradually, with a slow diminuendo, the wicked, salacious tune came to a pause, died to a thin, vibrating echo, ceased. Still with lowered lids and gently parted lips, the girl rose from the piano, wavered uncertainly a moment, then walked from the room with a slow, gliding step, her slim, naked feet passing soundlessly as a drift of air, as slowly she mounted the stairs.

Silently, in a sort of breathless wonder, I watched her disappear around the curve of the stone stairway, and was about to hazard a wandering opinion when a sharp exclamation from the Frenchman silenced me.

"Quick, my friend," he ordered, extinguishing the tall twin candles which burned beside the piano, "let us go up. Unless I am more badly mistaken than I think, there is that up there which is worth seeing!"

I FOLLOWED him up the stairs, down the first gallery to the second flight, and down the upper balcony to the bare, forbidding room Miss O'Shane used as studio. "Ah," he breathed as he struck a wax match and ignited the candles before the drawing-board, "did I not say it? Parbleu, Friend Trowbridge, Mademoiselle O'Shane has indulged in more than one unconscious art this night, or Jules de Grandin is a liar!"

As the candle flames leaped to burning points in the still air of the room I started forward, then shrank back from the sketch their radiance revealed. Progress had been made on the picture since we had viewed it earlier in the evening. The hooded figure

in the foreground was now clearly drawn, and it was no monk, but a steel-clad warrior with long white surtout worn over his armor and a white hood pulled forward, half concealing his thin, bearded face. But there was a face there, where there had been none before—a thin, vulpine, wicked face with set, cruel eyes which gloated on the prostrate figure before him. The upraised arm which had no hand when Miss O'Shane showed us the drawing after dinner now terminated in a mailed fist, and between the steel-sheathed fingers it held the stem of a chalice, a lovely, tulip-shaped cup of crystal, as though it would scatter its contents to the polished stone with which the picture room was paved. One other thing I noted before my glance shifted to the female figure—the long, red passion cross upon the white surtout was reversed, its long arm pointing upward, its transverse bar lowered, and even as I saw this I remembered vaguely that when knightly orders flourished it was the custom of heraldic courts thus to reverse a sir-knight's coats of arms when he was degraded from his chivalry as unworthy to maintain his traditions.

What had been the rough outlines of the manger were now firmly drawn into the representation of an altar, complete with the crucifix and tabernacle, but veiling the cross, so lightly sketched that, stare as I would, I could not make it out, was an odd-shaped, winged form, somewhat resembling a bat with outstretched wings.

Before the altar's lowest step the female figure, now drawn with the detail of an engraving, groveled starkly, chin and breasts, knees and elbows, instep and wrists pressed tightly to the stones; open, suppliant hands stretched forward, palms upward; rippling masses of hair flowing forward, like a plume of smoke blown in the wind, and obscuring the face.

And what was that upon the second step leading to the sanctuary? At first I thought it an alms-basin, but a second glance showed me it was a wide, shallow dish, and in it rested a long, curve-bladed knife, such as I had seen French butchers wear in their belts while enjoying a noonday smoke and resting for a space from their gory trade before the entrance of an abattoir.

"Good heavens!" I gasped, turning from the grisly scene with a feeling of physical sickness. "This is terrible, de Grandin! What are we going to do—?"

"Barbe et tete de Saint Denis, we do this!" he replied in a furious hissing voice. "Parbleu, shall Jules de Grandin be made a fool of twice in one night? Not if he knows it!"

Seizing a soap-rubber from the tray, he bent forward, and with half a dozen vigorous strokes reduced the picture to a meaningless smear of black and gray smudges.

"And now," he dusted his hands one against the other, as though to cleanse them of something foul, "let us to bed once more, my friend. I think we shall find something interesting to talk of tomorrow."

SHORTLY after breakfast next morning he found an excuse for separating Dunroe O'Shane from the rest of the company. "Will you not have pity on our loneliness, Mademoiselle?" he asked. "Here we lie, imprisoned in this great jail of a house, without so much as a radio program to cheer us through the morning hours. May we not trespass on your kindness and beg that you play for our delectation?"

"I play?" the girl answered with a half-incredulous smile. "Why, Dr. de Grandin, I don't know one note from another. I never played the piano in my life!"

"U'm?" He looked polite doubt as he twisted the ends of his mustache. "It is perhaps that I do not plead our cause fervently enough, Mademoiselle?"

"But truly, I can't play," she persisted.

"That's right, Dr. de Grandin," one of the young men chimed in. "Dunroe's a whiz at drawing, but she's absolutely tone-deaf. Can't carry a tune in a basket. I used to go to school with her, and they always gave her a job passing out programs or selling tickets when the class chorus sang."

De Grandin shot me a quick glance and shook his head warningly.

"What does it mean?" I asked as soon

as we were together once more. "She declares she can't play, and her friends corroborate her, but—"

"But stranger things have happened, and, mordieu, still stranger ones will happen again, or the presentiment which I have is nothing more than the consequences of a too hearty breakfast!" he broke in with one of his quick, elfin smiles. "Let us play the silly fool, Friend Trowbridge; let us pretend to believe that the moon is composed entirely of green cheese and that mice terrorize the pussy-cat. So doing, we shall learn more than if we attempt to appear filled with wisdom which we do not possess."

IV

"OH, I know what let's do!" Miss Prettybridge, the lady of the scintillating teeth, whom de Grandin had squired to dinner the previous evening, exclaimed shortly after 10 o'clock that night. "This is such a romantic old house—I'm sure it's just full of memories. Let's have a seance!"

"Fine, splendid, capital!" chorused a dozen voices. "Who'll be the medium? Anybody got a ouija board or a planchette table?"

"Order, order, please!" the self-constituted chairwoman rapped peremptorily on a bridge table with her lorgnette. "I know how to do it! We'll go into the dining-room and gather about the table. Then, when we've formed the mystic circle, if there are any spirits about we'll make 'em talk to us by rapping. Come on, everybody!"

"I don't think I like this," Miss O'Shane murmured as she laid her hand on my arm. Her usually pale face was paler still, and there was an expression of haunted fear in her eyes as she hesitated at the doorway.

"I don't care much for such nonsense myself," I admitted as we followed the others reluctantly into the refectory.

"Be close to me while this progresses, Friend Trowbridge," de Grandin whispered as he guided me to a seat beside him. "I care not much for this business of the monkey, but it may be the old she-fool yonder will serve our purpose unwittingly. The greatest danger is to Mademoiselle Dunroe. Keep watch on her."

The candles in the dining-room wall sconces were extinguished, and with Miss Prettybridge at the head of the table, the entire company was seated at the board, each one with his hands outspread on the dark, polished oak before him, his thumbs touching lightly, his little fingers in contact with those of his neighbors to right and left.

"Spirits," Miss Prettybridge, in her role of priestess, threw out the customary challenge, "spirits, if you are here tonight, signify your presence by rapping once on the table."

Thirty seconds or so elapsed without an answer to the lady's invitation. A woman half-way down the board tittered in half-hysterical embarrassment, and her neighbor silenced her with an impatient sh-s-s-sh!" Then, distinctly as though thumped with a knuckle, the ancient table gave forth a resounding crack.

"If the spirit is a man, rap once; if a woman, twice," instructed Miss Prettybridge.

Another pause, somewhat longer, this time, then slowly, distinctly, two soft knocks from the very center of the table.

"Oh, a woman!" trilled one of the girls. "How perfectly thrilling!"

"And your name is—what?" demanded the mistress of ceremonies in a voice which trembled slightly in spite of her effort at control.

Thirteen slow, clear strokes sounded on the table, followed by one, then by eighteen, then others in series until nine distinct groups of blows were recorded.

"M-a-r-i-e-a-n-n-e Marie Anne—a French girl! exclaimed Miss Prettybridge. "Whom do you wish to speak with, Marie Anne? Rap when I come to the name as I call the roll. Dr. Trowbridge?

No response.

"Dr. de Grandin?"

A sharp, affirmative knock answered her, and the visitant was bidden spell out her message.

Followed a rapid, telegraphic series of

blows on the table, sometimes coming so quickly that it was impossible for us to decode them.

I listened as attentively as I could; so did everyone else, except Jules de Grandin. After a moment, during which his sleek blond head was thrust forward inquiringly, he turned his attention to Dunroe O'Shane.

The logs were burning low in the fireplace, but a shifting, flickering glow soaked through the darkness now and again, its red reflection lighting up the girl's face with a strange, unearthly illumination like the nimbus about the head of a saint in a medieval painting.

I FELT the Frenchman's fingers stiffen against mine, and realized the cause of his tenseness as I stole a fleeting glance at Miss O'Shane. Her eyes had closed, and her red, petulant lips were lightly parted, as though in sleep. Over her small, regular features had crept a look of longing ecstasy.

Even my limited experience with psychotherapy was sufficient to tell me she was in a condition verging on hypnosis, if not actually over the borderline of consciousness, and I was about to leap from my seat with an offer of assistance when the insistent pressure of de Grandin's fingers on mine held me back. Turning toward him, I saw his head nod sharply toward the doorway behind the girl, and following his silent bidding, I cast my glance into the passageway in time to see someone slip quickly and noiselessly down the hall.

For a moment I sat in wondering silence, debating whether I had seen one of the servants creep past or whether I was the victim of an optical illusion, when my attention was suddenly compelled to a second figure, then a third, a fourth and a fifth passing the archway's opening like flashes of light against a darkened wall. My reason told me my eyes were playing pranks, for the gliding, soundless figures filing in quick procession past the proscenium of the dining-room door were tall, bearded men encased in gleaming black armor, and shrouded from shoulder to spurs in sable cloaks.

I blinked my eyes and shook my head in bewilderment, wondering if I had fallen into a momentary doze and dreamed the vision, but sharply, with theatrical suddenness, there sounded the raucous, brazen bray of a bugle, the skirling squeal of an unoiled windlass reeling out rope, the thud of a drawbridge falling into place; then, above the whistling November wind there winded another trumpet flourish and the clatter of ironshod hooves against stone paving-blocks.

"Why, what was that?" Miss Prettybridge forgot the spirit message still being thumped out on the table and threw back her head in momentary alarm.

"Sounds like a troop of scouts out for an evening's lark," put in our host, rising from the table. "Queer they should come out here to toot their bugles, though."

"Ha, parbleu, you say rightly, my friend," de Grandin broke in, rising so suddenly that his chair tilted back and fell to the floor with a resounding crash. "It is queer, most damnably queer. "Boy scouts did you say? Pray they be not scouts of evil in search of some hapless little lad while a company of empty-headed fools sit idly by listening to the chatter of their decoy!

"Did none of you recognize the message the spirit had for me?"

We looked at him in silent astonishment as he lighted the wall-candles one after another and faced us with a countenance gone livid with fury.

"Ah bah, it is scarcely worth troubling to tell you," he cried, "but the important message the spirit had for me was a silly little nursery rhyme:

"Great A, little a,
Bouncing B.
The cat's in the cupboard,
And can't see me!

"No, the cat might not see that accursed decoy spirit, but Jules de Grandin could see the others as they slunk past the door upon their devil's work! Trowbridge, mon vieux, look to Mademoiselle O'Shane, if you will."

Startled by his command, I turned round. Dunroe O'Shane had fallen forward across

the table, her long, tawny hair freed from its restraining pins and lying about her head like a pool of liquid bronze. Her eyes were still closed, but the peaceful expression had gone from her face, and in its stead was a look of unutterable fear and loathing.

"Take her up, some of you," de Grandin almost shrieked. "Bear her to her chamber and Dr. Trowbridge and I will attend to her. Then, Monsieur Van Riper, if you will be so good, I shall ask you to lend us one of your swiftest motor cars."

"A motor car—now?" Van Riper's incredulous tone showed he doubted his ears.

"Precisement, Monsieur, permit that I compliment you on the excellence of your hearing," the Frenchman replied. "A swift motor car with plenty of fuel, if you please. There are certain medicines needed to attend this sickness of body and soul, and to strike directly at its cause, and we must have them without delay. Dr. Trowbridge will drive; you need not trouble your chauffeur to leave his bed."

TEN MINUTES later, having no more idea of our destination than I had of the underlying causes of the last half hour's strange events, I sped down the turnpike, Van Riper's powerful motor warming up with every revolution, and gaining speed with every foot we traveled.

"Faster, faster, my friend," the little Frenchman besought as we whirled madly around a banked curve in the road and started down the two-mile straightaway with the speedometer registering sixty-five miles an hour.

Twin disks of lurid flame arose above the crest of the gradient before us, growing larger and brighter every second, and the pounding staccato of high-powered motorcycles driven at top speed came to us through the shrieking wind.

I throttled down our engine to a legal speed as the State Troopers neared, but instead of rushing past they came to a halt, one on each side of us. "Where you from?" demanded the one to our left, on whose arm a sergeant's chevrons showed.

"From Mr. Van Riper's house—the Cloisters," I answered. "I'm Dr. Trowbridge, of Harrisonville, and this is Dr. de Grandin. A young lady at the house had been taken ill, and we're rushing home for medicine."

"Ump?" the sergeant grunted. "Come from th' Cloisters, do you? Don't suppose you passed anyone on the road?"

"No—" I began, but de Grandin leaned past me.

"For whom do you seek, mon sergent?" he demanded.

"Night riders!" the words fairly spat from the policeman's lips. "Lot o' dam' kidnapers, sir. Old lady down th' road about five miles—name o' Stebbens—was walkin' home from a neighbor's with her grandson, a cute little lad about three years old, when a crowd o' bums came riding hell-bent for election past her, knocked her for a loop an' grabbed up the kid. Masqueraders they was—wore long black gowns, she said, an' rode on black horses. Went away whoopin' an' yellin' to each other in some foreign language, an' laughin' like a pack o' dogs. Be God, they'll laugh outa th' other side o' their dirty mouths if we catch 'em!"

"Come on, Shoup, let's roll," he ordered his companion.

The roar of their motorcycles grew fainter and fainter as they swept down the road, and in another moment we were pursuing our way toward the city, gathering speed with every turn of the wheels.

V

WE HAD gone scarcely another mile before the slate-colored clouds which the wind had been piling together in the upper sky ripped apart and great clouds of soft, feathery snowflakes came tumbling down, blotting out the road ahead and cutting our speed to a snail's pace. It was almost graylight before we arrived at the outskirts of Harrisonville, and the snow was falling harder than ever as we headed up the main throughfare.

"Helas, my friend, there is not the chance of the Chinaman that we can return to the Cloisters before noon, be our luck of the

best," de Grandin muttered disconsolately; "therefore I suggest that we go to your house and obtain a few hours' rest."

"But how about the medicine you wanted?" I objected. "Hadn't we better see about getting that first?"

"Non," he returned. "It will keep. The medicine I seek could not be administered before tonight—if that soon—and we can secure it later as well as now."

Rather surprised at our unheralded return, but used to the vagaries of a bachelor physician and his eccentric friend, Nora McGinnis, my housekeeper and general factotum, prepared a toothsome breakfast for us next morning, and we had completed the meal, lingering over coffee and cigarettes a little longer than usual, when de Grandin's face suddenly went livid as he thrust the folded newspaper he had been reading into my hand.

"Look, *mon ami*," he whispered raspingly. "Read what is there. They did not wait long to be about their deviltry!"

"STATE COP DEAD IN MYSTERY KILLING"

announced the headline to which he had directed my attention. Below was a brief dispatch, evidently a bit of last-minute news, sandwiched between the announcement of a sheriff's sale and a patent medicine advertisement:

Johnskill—Sergeant Rosswell of the state constabulary is dead and Private Shoup in a serious condition as the result of a battle with a mysterious band of masked ruffians near this place early this morning. Shortly after 10 o'clock last night Matilda Stebbens, of Osmondville, who was returning from a visit to a neighbor's with her three-year-old grandson, George, was attacked by a company of men mounted on black or dark-colored horses and enveloped in long black gowns, according to her story to the troopers. The leader of the gang struck her a heavy blow with a club or blackjack, evidently with the intention of stunning her and seized the little boy, lifting him to his saddle. Had it not been for the fact that Mrs. Stebbens still affects long hair and was wearing a stiff felt hat, the blow would undoubtedly have rendered her unconscious, but as it was she was merely knocked into the roadside ditch without losing consciousness, and as she lay there, half stunned from the blow, she heard the kidnapers exchange several words in some foreign language, Italian, she thought, before they set out at a breakneck pace, giving vent to wild whoops and yells. The direction of their flight was toward this place, and as soon as she was able to walk, Mrs. Stebbens hobbled to the nearest telephone and communicated with the state police.

Sergeant Rosswell and Private Shoup were detailed to the case and started in pursuit of the abductors on their motorcycles, encountering no one along the road who would admit having seen the company of mysterious mounted gangsters. About two miles this side of the Cloisters, palatial country place of Tandy Van Riper, well known New York financier, according to Trooper Shoup, he and his companion came upon the kidnapers, riding at almost incredible speed. Drawing their pistols, the state policemen, called on the fleeing men to halt, and receiving no reply, opened fire. Their bullets, though fired at almost pointblank range, seemed to take no effect, Trooper Shoup declares, and the leader of the criminal band turned about and charged him and his companion, deliberately riding Sergeant Rosswell down. According to Shoup, a shot fired by Rosswell directly at the horse which was about to trample him, took no effect, though the pistol was less than three feet from the beast's breast. Shoup is suffering from a broken arm, three fractured ribs and a severe bruise on the head, which, he alleges, was dealt him when one of the thugs struck him with the flat of a sword.

Physicians at Mercy Hospital, believing Shoup's description of the criminals and the fight to be colored by the beating he received, intimate that he is not wholly responsible for his statements, as he positively declares that every member of the band of criminals was fully arrayed in black armor and armed with a long sword,

Working on the theory that the kidnapers are a band of Italian desperadoes who assumed this fantastic disguise, strong posses of state police are scouring the neighborhood. It is thought the little Stebbens boy was abducted by mistake, as the family are known to be in very moderate circumstances and the chances of obtaining a ransom for the lad are slight.

"You see?" de Grandin asked as I put the paper down with an exclamation of dismay.

"No, I'm hanged if I do," I shot back. "The whole gruesome business is beyond me. Is there any connection between what we saw at the Cloisters last night and—"

"*Mort d'un rat noir,* is there connection between the serpent and his venom—the Devil and the flames of hell?" he cried. "Yes, my friend, there is such a connection as will take all our skill and courage to break, I fear. Meantime, let us hasten, let us fly to the City Hospital. There is that there which shall prove more than a surprise to those vile miscreants, those forsworn servants of the Lord, when next we see them, *mon vieux.*"

"What in the world are you talking about?" I demanded. "Whom do you mean by 'forsworn servants of the Lord'?"

"Ha, good friend," he returned, his face working with emotion, "you will know in due time, if what I suspect is true. If not—" He raised his narrow shoulders in a fatalistic shrug as he snatched his overcoat.

FOR upward of half an hour I cooled my heels in the frosty winter air while de Grandin was closeted in conference with the superintendent of the City Hospital, but when he came out he was wearing such a smile of serene happiness that I had not the heart to berate him for leaving me outside so long.

"And now, kind friend, if you will take me so far as the pro-cathedral, I shall have done the last of my errands, and we may begin our journey to the Cloisters," he announced as he leaped nimbly into the seat beside me.

The Right Reverend De Motte Gregory, suffragan bishop of our diocese, was seated at his desk in the synod house as de Grandin and I were announced, and graciously consented to see us at once. He had been a more than ordinarily successful railway executive, a licensed legal practitioner and a certified public accountant before he assumed the cloth, and his worldly training had taught him the value of time and words, both his own and others', and rarely did he waste either.

"Monsieur l'Eveque," de Grandin began after he had greeted the gray-haired cleric with a rigidly formal European bow, "in the garden of your beautiful church there grows a bush raised from a sprig of the Holy Thorn of Glastonbury—the tree which sprang from the staff of the blessed Joseph of Arimathea when he landed in Britain after his voyage and travail. Monseigneur, we are come to beg a so little spray of that shrub from you."

The bishop's eyes opened wide with surprise, but de Grandin gave him no time for reflection.

"Sir," he hurried on, "it is not that we wish to adorn our own gardens, nor yet to put it to a shameful commercial use, but we need it—need it most urgently in a matter of great importance which is toward—"

Leaving his chair he leaned across the bishop's wide rosewood desk and began whispering rapidly in the churchman's ear.

The slightly annoyed frown which mounted to the bishop's face as the little Frenchman took the liberty changed slowly to a look of incredulity, then to an expression of amazement. "You really believe this?" he asked at length.

"More, Monseigneur, I almost know it," de Grandin assured him earnestly, "and if I am mistaken, as I hope I am but fear I am not, the holy thorn can do no harm, while it may—" He paused, waving his hand in an expressive gesture.

Bishop Gregory touched one of the row of call-buttons on his desk. "You shall have the cutting from the tree, and be very welcome," he assured my friend, "but I join with you in the hope you are mistaken."

"Grand merci, Monseigneur!" de Grandin

acknowledged with another bow. "Mordieu, but your great heart is equaled only by your massive intellect! Half the clergy would have said I raved had I told them one small quarter of what I related to you."

The bishop smiled a little wearily as he put the sprig thorn-bush into de Grandin's hand. "Half the clergy, like half the laity, know so much that they know next to nothing," he replied.

"Name of a name," de Grandin swore enthusiastically as we turned toward the Cloisters, "and they say he is a worldly man! Pardieu, when will the foolish ones learn that the man who dedicates worldly wisdom to heaven's service is the most valuable servant of all?"

VI

DUNROE O'SHANE was attired in a long, brown-linen smock and hard at work on her drawing when we arrived at the Cloisters shortly before luncheon. She seemed none the worse for her fainting fit of the previous night, and the company were rather inclined to rally de Grandin on the serious diagnosis he had made before rushing away to secure medicine for her.

I was amazed at the good-natured manner in which he took their chaffing, but a hasty whisper in my ear explained his self-control. "Apes' anger and fools' laughter are alike to be treated with scorn, my friend," he told me. "We—you and I—have work to do here, and we must not let the hum of pestilent gnats drive us from our purpose."

Bridge and dancing filled the evening from dinner to midnight, and the party broke up shortly after 12 with the understanding that all were to be ready to attend Thanksgiving services in the near-by parish church at 11 o'clock next morning.

"Ts-s-st, Friend Trowbridge, do not disrobe," de Grandin ordered as I was about to shed my dinner clothes and prepare for bed; "we must be ready for an instant sortie from now until cockcrow tomorrow, I fear."

"What's this all about, anyhow?" I demanded a little irritably, as I dropped on the bed and wrapped myself in a blanket. "There's been more confounded mystery here than I ever saw in a harmless old house, what with Miss O'Shane making funny drawings, throwing fainting-fits, and bugles sounding in the courtyard, and—"

"Ha, harmless, did you say?" he cut in with a grim smile. "My friend, if this house be harmless, then prussic acid is a healthful drink. Attend me with care, if you please. Do you know what this place is?"

"Certainly I do," I responded with some heat. "It's an old Cypriote villa brought to America and—"

"It was once a chapter house of the Knights of the Temple," he interrupted shortly, "and a Cyprian chapter house, at that. Does that mean nothing to you? Do you not know the Knights Templars my friend?"

"I ought to," I replied. "I've been one for the last fifteen years."

"Oh, la, la!" he laughed. "You will surely slay me, my friend. You good, kind American gentlemen who dress in pretty uniforms and carry swords are no more like the old Knights of the Temple of Solomon than are these other good men who wear red tarbooshes and call themselves Nobles of the Mystic Shrine like the woman-stealing, pilgrim-murdering Arabs of the desert.

"Listen: The history of the Templars' order is a long one, but we can touch its high spots in a few words. Formed originally for the purpose of fighting the Infidel in Palestine and aiding poor pilgrims to the Holy City they did yeomen service in the cause of God; but when Europe forsook its crusades and the Saracens took Jerusalem, the knights, whose work was done, did not disband. Not they. Instead, they clung to their various houses in Europe, and grew fat, lazy and wicked in a life of leisure, supported by the vast wealth they had amassed from gifts from grateful pilgrims and the spoils of battle. In 1191 they bought the Isle of Cyprus from Richard I of England and established several chapter houses there, and it was in those houses that unspeakable things were done. Cyprus is one of the most ancient dwelling places of religion, and of

her illegitimate sister, superstition. It was there that the worshipers of Cytherea, goddess of beauty and of love—and other things less pleasant—had their stronghold. Before the Romans held the land it was drenched with unspeakable orgies. The very name of the island has passed into an invidious adjective in your language—do you not say a thing is Cyprian when you would signify it is lascivious? Certainly."

"But—"

"Hear me," he persisted, waving aside my interruption. "This Cytherea was but another form of Aphrodite, and Aphrodite, in turn, was but another name for the Eastern Goddess Astarte or Istar. You begin to comprehend? Her rites were celebrated with obscene debaucheries, but her worshipers became such human swine that only the most revolting inversions of natural things would satisfy them. The flaunting and sacrifices of virtue were not enough; they must need sacrifice—literally—those things which impersonated virtue—little, innocent children and chaste young maidens. Their foul altars must run red with the blood of innocence. These things were traditions in Cyprus long before the Knights Templars took up their abode there, and, as one cannot sleep among dogs without acquiring fleas, so the knights, grown slothful and lazy, with nothing to do but think up ways of spending their time and wealth, became addicts to the evils of the earlier, heathen ways of their new home. Thoughts are things, my friend, and the evil thoughts of the old Cyprians took root and flourished in the brains of those unfortunate old warrior-monks whose hands were no longer busy with the sword and whose lips no longer did service to the Most High God.

"You doubt it? Consider: Though Philip IV and Clement V undoubtedly did Jacques de Molay to death for no better reason than that they might cast lots for his raiment, the fact remains that many of the knights confessed to dreadful sacrileges committed in the chapter houses—to children slain on the altars once dedicated to God, all in the name of the heathen goddess Cytherea.

"This very house wherein we sit was once the scene of such terrible things as those. About its stones must linger the presence of the evil men, the renegade priests of God, who once did them. These discarnate intelligences have lain dormant since the Fourteenth Century, but for some reason, which we will not now discuss, I believe they have wakened into physical beings once more. It was their reincarnated spirits we saw flitting past the door last night while Mademoiselle Dunroe lay in a trance; it was they who took the little boy from his grandmother's arms; it was they who slew the brave policeman; it is they who will soon attempt to perform the hideous inversion of the mass."

"See here, de Grandin," I expostulated, "there have been some deucedly queer goings-on here, I'll admit, but when you try to tell me that a lot of old soldier-monks have come to life again and are traipsing around the countryside stealing children, you're piling it on a bit too thick. Now, if there were any evidence to prove that—"

"Silence!" his sharp whisper brought me up with a start as he rose from his chair and crept, catlike, toward the door, opening it a crack and glancing down the darkened corridor outside. Then:

"Come, my friend," he bade in a low breath, "come and see what I behold."

As he swung the door back I glanced down the long, stone-paved gallery, dark as Erebus save as cancellated bars of moonlight shot obliquely down from the tiny mullioned windows piercing the dome, and made out a gliding, wraithlike figure in trailing white garments.

"Dunroe O'Shane!" I murmured dazedly, watching the retreating form slipping soundlessly down the dark balcony. The wavering light of the candle she bore in her upraised hand cast gigantic shadows against the carved balustrade and the sculptured uprights of the interlaced arches supporting the gallery above, and hobgoblin shades seemed to march along beside her like an escort of unclean genii from the legions of Eblis. I watched open-mouthed with amazement as she slipped down the passage, her feet, obscured in a haze of trailing draperies,

treading noiselessly, her free hand stretched outward toward the balcony rail. Next moment the gallery was deserted; abruptly as a motion picture fades from the screen when the projecting light winks out, Dunroe O'Shane and her flickering rushlight vanished from our sight.

"Quick, Friend Trowbridge," the Frenchman whispered, "after her—it was through that further door she went!"

Quietly as possible we ran down the gallery, paused before the high, pointed-topped door and wrenched at its wrought-iron handle. The oaken panels held firm, for the door was latched on the farther side.

"Ten thousand little devils!" de Grandin cried in vexation. "We are stale-mated!"

For a moment I thought he would hurl himself against the four-inch planks of the door in impotent fury, but he collected himself with an effort, and drawing a flashlight from his jacket pocket, handed it to me with the command, "Hold the light steady on the keyhole, my friend." The next instant he sank to his knees, produced two short lengths of thin steel wire and began methodically picking the lock.

"Ha," he exclaimed, as he rose and dusted the knees of his trousers, "those old ones built for strength, Friend Trowbridge, but they knew little of subtlety. Little did that ancient locksmith dream his handiwork would one day meet with Jules de Grandin."

The unbarred door swung inward beneath his touch, and we stepped across the stone sill of a vast, dungeon-dark apartment.

"Mademoiselle?" he called softly. "Mademoiselle Dunroe—are you here?"

He shot the searching beam of his flashlight hither and yon about the big room, disclosing high walls of heavy carved oak, a great canopy bed, several cathedral chairs and one or two massive, iron-bound chests—but found no living thing.

"Mordieu, but this is strange!" he muttered, sinking to his knees to flash his light beneath the high-carved bed.

"Into this room she did most certainly come but a few little minutes ago, gliding like a spirit, and now, pouf, out of this same room she does vanish like a ghost!"

Though somewhat larger, the room was similar to most other bedchambers in the house, paneled with rather crudely carved, age-blackened wood for the entire height of its walls, ceiled with great beams which still bore the marks of the adz, and floored with octagonal marble tiles of alternate black and white. We went over every inch of it, searching for some secret exit, for, save the one by which we had entered, there was no door in the place, and the two great windows were of crude, semi-transparent glass let into metal frames securely cemented to the surrounding stones. Plainly, nobody had left the room that way.

At the farther end of the apartment stood a stall wardrobe, elaborately decorated with carved scenes of chase and battle. Opening one of the double doors letting into the press, de Grandin inspected the interior, which, like the outside was carved in every available place. "U'm?" he said, surveying the walls under his flashlight. "It may be that this is but the anteroom to—ha!"

He broke off, pointing dramatically to a carved group in the center of one of the back panels. It represented a procession of hunters returning from their sport, deer, boar and other animals lashed to long poles which the huntsmen bore shoulder-high. The men were filing through the arched entrance to a castle, the great doors of which swung back to receive them. One of the door-leaves, apparently, had warped loose from the body of the plank from which it was carved.

"C'est tres adroit, n'est-ce-pas?" my companion asked with a delighted grin. "Had I not seen such things before, it might have imposed on me. As it is—"

REACHING forward, he gave the loosened door a sharp, quick push, and the entire back of the wardrobe slipped upward revealing a narrow opening.

"And what have we here?" de Grandin asked, playing his spotlight through the secret doorway.

Straight ahead for three or four feet ran a flagstone sill, worn smooth in the center, as though with the shuffling tread of many feet. Beyond that began a flight of narrow,

stone stairs which spiraled steeply down a shaft like the flue of a monster chimney.

De Grandin turned to me, and his little, heart-shaped face was graver than I had ever seen it.

"Trowbridge, dear, kind friend," he said in a voice so low and hoarse I could scarcely make out his words, "we have faced many perils together—perils of spirit and perils of flesh—and always we have triumphed. This time we may not. If I do not mistake rightly, there lies below these steps an evil more ancient and potent than any we have hitherto met. I have armed us against it with the weapons of religion and of science, but—I do not know that they will avail. Say, then, will you turn back now and go to your bed? I shall think no less of you, for no man should be compelled to face this thing unknowingly, and there is now no time to explain. If I survive, I shall return and tell you all. If I come not back with daylight, know that I have perished in my failure, and think kindly of me as one who loved you deeply. Will you not now say adieu, old friend?" He extended his hand and I saw the long, smooth-jointed fingers were trembling with suppressed nervousness.

"I will not!" I returned hotly, stung to the quick by his suggestion. "I don't know what's down there, but if you go, I go, too!"

Before I realized what he was about, he had flung his arms about my neck and kissed me on both cheeks. "Onward, then, brave comrade!" he cried. "This night we fight such a fight as had not been waged since the sainted George slew the monster!"

VII

ROUND and round a steadily descending spiral, while I counted a hundred and seventy steps, we went, going deeper into inky blackness. Finally, when I had begun to grow giddy with the endless corkscrew turns, we arrived at a steeply sloping tunnel, floored with smooth black-and-white tiles. Down this we hastened, until we traversed a distance of a hundred feet; then for a similar length we trod a level path, and began an ascent as steep as the first decline.

"Careful—cautiously, my friend," the Frenchman warned in a whisper.

Pausing a moment while he fumbled in the pocket of his jacket, my companion strode toward the barrier and laid his left hand on its heavy, wrought-iron latch.

The portal swung back almost as he touched it, and:

"Qui va la?" challenged a voice from the darkness.

De Grandin threw the ray of his torch across the doorway, disclosing a tall, spare form in gleaming black plate-armor over which was drawn the brown-serge habit of a monk. The sentry wore his hair in a sort of bob approximating the haircut affected by children today, and on his sallow immature face sprouted the rudiments of a straggling beard. It was a youthful face and a weak one which de Grandin's light disclosed, but the face of youth already well schooled in viciousness.

"Qui vive?" the fellow called doubtfully in a rather high, effeminate voice, laying a hand on the hilt of a heavy broadsword dangling from the wide, brass-studded baldric looped over his cassock.

"Those on the service of the Most High God, petit bete!" returned de Grandin, drawing something (a pronged sprig of wood, I thought) from his jacket pocket and thrusting it toward the warder's face.

"Ohe!" cried the other sharply, shrinking back. "Touch me not, good messires, I pray—I—"

"Ha—so?" de Grandin gritted between his teeth, and drew the branched stick downward across the sentry's face.

Astonishingly, the youth seemed to shrink and shrivel in upon himself. Trembling as though with an ague, he bent forward, buckled at the knees, fell toward the floor, and—was gone! Sword, armor, cassock and the man who wore them dwindled to nothingness before our sight.

A hundred feet or so farther on, our way was barred by another door, wider, higher and heavier than the first. While no tiler guarded it, it was so firmly locked that all our efforts were powerless to budge it.

"Friend Trowbridge," de Grandin an-

nounced, "it seems we shall have to pick this lock, even as we did the other. Do you keep watch through yonder grille while I make the way open for us." Reaching up, he moved aside a shutter covering a barred peephole in the door's thick panels; then, dropping to his knees, drew forth his wires and began working at the lock.

Gazing through the tiny wicket, I beheld a chapel-like room of circular formation, cunningly floored with slabs of polished yellow stone, inlaid with occasional plaques of purple.

By the glow of a wavering vigil lamp and the flicker of several guttering ecclesiastical candles, I saw the place was roofed with a vaulted ceiling supported by a number of converging arches, and the pier of each arch was supported by the carved image of a huge human foot which rested on the crown of a hideous, half-human head, crushing it downward and causing it to grimace hellishly with mingled pain and fury.

Beyond the yellow sanctuary lamp loomed the altar, approached by three low steps, and on it was a tall wooden crucifix from which the corpus had been stripped and to which had been nailed, in obscure caricature, a huge black bat. The staples fastening the poor beast to the cross must have hurt unmercifully, for it strove hysterically to free itself.

Almost sickened at the sight, I described the scene to de Grandin as he worked at the lock, speaking in a muted whisper, for, though there was no sign of living thing save the tortured bat, I felt that there were listening ears concealed in the darkness.

"Good!" he grunted as he hastened with his task. "It may be we are yet in time, good friend." Even as he spoke there came a sharp click, and the door's heavy bolts slipped back under the pressure of his improvised picklock.

Slowly, inch by careful inch, we forced the great door back.

BUT even as we did so, there came from the rear of the circular chamber the subdued measures of a softly intoned Gregorian chant, and something white moved forward through the shadows.

It was a man arrayed in black-steel armor over which was drawn a white surtout emblazoned with a reversed passion cross, and in his hands he bore a wide-mouthed brazen bowl like an alms-basin. In the tray rested a wicked-looking, curve-bladed knife.

With a mocking genuflection to the altar he strode up the steps and placed his burden on the second tread; then, with a coarse guffaw, he spat upon the pinioned bat and backed downward.

As a signal a double file of armored men came marching out of the gloom, ranged themselves in two ranks, one to right, one to left of the altar, and whipped their long swords from their sheaths, clashing them together, tip to tip, forming an arcade of flashing steel between them.

So softly that I felt, rather than heard him, de Grandin sighed in suppressed fury as blade met blade and two more men-at-arms, each bearing a smoking censer, strode forward beneath the roof of steel. The perfume of the incense was strong, acrid, sweet, and it mounted to our brains like the fumes of some accursed drug. But even as we sniffed its seductive scent, our eyes widened at sight of the form which paced slowly behind the mailed acolytes.

Ceremoniously, step by pausing step, she came, like a bride marching under the arbor of uplifted swords at a military wedding, and my eyes fairly arched at the beauty of her. Milk-white, lissom and pliant as a peeled willow wand, clad only in the jeweled loveliness of her own pearly whiteness, long, bronze hair sweeping in a cloven tide from her pale brow and cataracting over her tapering shoulders, came Dunroe O'Shane. Her eyes were closed, as though in sleep, and on her red, full lips lay the yearning half-smile of the bride who ascends the aisle to meet her bridegroom, or the novice who mounts the altar steps to make her full profession. And as she advanced, her supple, long-fingered hands waved slowly to and fro, weaving fantastic arabesques in the air.

"Hail, Cytherea, Queen and Priestess and Goddess; hail, She Who Confers Life and Being on Her Servants!" came the full-throated salutation of the double row of

armored men as they clashed their blades together in martial salute, then dropped to one knee in greeting and adoration.

For a moment the undraped priestess paused below the altar stairs; then, as though forced downward by invincible pressure, she dropped, and we heard the smacking impact of soft flesh against the stone floor as she flung herself prostrate and beat her brow and hands against the floor in utter self-abasement before the marble altar and its defiled calvary.

"Is all prepared?" The question rang out sonorously as a cowled figure advanced from the shadows and strode with a swaggering step to the altar.

"All is prepared!" the congregation answered with one voice.

"Then bring the paschal lamb, even the lamp without fleece!" The deep-voiced command somehow sent shivers through me.

Two armored votaries slipped quietly away, returning in an instant with the struggling body of a little boy between them—a chubby child, naked, who fought and kicked and offered such resistance as his puny strength allowed while he called aloud to "Mamma" and "Grandma" to save him.

Down against the altar steps the butchers flung the little man; then one took his chubby, dimpled hands in relentless grip while the other drew backward at his ankles, suspending him above the wide-mouthed brazen bowl reposing on the second step.

"Take up the knife, Priestess and Queen of goodly Salamis," the hooded master of ceremonies commanded. "Take up the sacrificial knife, that the red blood may flow to our Goddess, and we hold high wassail in Her honor! O'er land and sea, o'er burning desert and heaving billow have we journeyed—"

"Villains—assassins—renegades!" Jules de Grandin bounded from his station in the shadow like a frenzied cat. "By the blood of all the blessed martyrs, you have journeyed altogether too far from hell, your home!"

"Ha? Interlopers?" rasped the hooded man. "So be it. Three hearts shall smoke upon our altar instead of one!"

"Parbleu, nothing shall smoke but the fires of your endless torture as your foul carcasses burn ceaselessly in hell!" de Grandin returned, leaping forward and drawing out the forked stick with which he had struck down the porter at the outer gate.

A burst of contemptuous laughter greeted him. "Thinkest thou to overcome me with such a toy?" the cowled one asked between shouts. "My warder at the gate succumbed to your charms—he was a poor weakling. Him you have passed, but not me. Now die!"

From beneath his cassock he snatched a long, two-handed sword, whirled its blade aloft in a triple flourish, and struck directly at de Grandin's head.

Almost by a miracle, it seemed, the Frenchman avoided the blow, dropped his useless sprig of thornwood and snatched a tiny, quill-like object from his pocket. Dodging the devastating thrusts of the enemy de Grandin toyed an instant with the capsule in his hand, unscrewed the cap and, suddenly changing his tactics, advanced directly on his foe.

"Ha, Monsieur from the Fires, here is fire you know not of!" he shouted, thrusting forward the queer-looking rod and advancing within reach of the other's sword.

I stared in open-mouthed amazement. Poised for another slashing blow with his great sword, the armed man wavered momentarily, while an expression of astonishment, bewilderment, finally craven fear overspread his lean, predatory features. Lowering his sword, he thrust feebly with the point, but there was no force behind the stab; the deadly steel clattered to the floor before he could drive it into the little Frenchman's breast.

THE hooded man seemed growing thinner; his tall, spare form, which had bulked a full head taller than de Grandin a moment before, seemed losing substance—growing gradually transparent, like an early-morning fog slowly dissolving before the strengthening rays of the rising sun. Behind him, through him, I could dimly espy the outlines of the violated altar and the pros-

trate woman before its steps. Now the objects in the background became plainer and plainer. The figure of the armored man was no longer a thing of flesh and blood and cold steel overspread with a monk's habit, but an unsubstantial phantom, like an oddly shaped cloud. It was composed of trailing, rolling clouds of luminous vapor which gradually disintegrated into strands and floating webs of phosphorescence, and these, in turn, gave way to scores of little nebula of light which glowed like cigarette-ends of intense blue radiance. Then, where the nebula had been were only dancing, shifting specks of bright blue fire, finally nothing but a few pin-points of light; then—nothing.

Like shadows thrown of forest trees when the moon is at her zenith, the double row of men-at-arms stood at ease while de Grandin battled with their champion; now, their leader gone, they turned and scuttled in panic toward the rearward shadows, but Jules de Grandin was after them like a speeding arrow.

"Ha, renegades," he called mockingly, pressing closer and closer, "you who steal away helpless little boy-babies from the arms of their grand'meres and then would sacrifice them on your altar, do you like the feast Jules de Grandin brings? You who would make wassail with the blood of babies —drink the draft I have prepared! Fools, mockers at God, where now is your deity? Call on her—call one Cytherea! Pardieu, I fear her not.

As it was with the master, so it was with the underlings: Closer and closer de Grandin pressed against the struggling mass of demoralized men, before his advance like ice when pressed upon by red-hot iron. One moment they milled and struggled, shrieking for aid to some unclean deity; the next they were dissolved into nebulous vapor, drifting aimlessly a moment in the still air, then swept away to nothingness.

"And so, my friend, that is done," announced de Grandin matter-of-factly as he might have mentioned the ending of a meal. "There crouches Mademoiselle O'Shane, Friend Trowbridge; come, let us seek her clothes—they should be somewhere here."

Behind the altar we found Dunroe's night-robe and negligee lying in a ring, just as she had shrugged out of them before taking up her march between the upraised swords. Gently as a nurse attending a babe, the little Frenchman raised the swooning girl from her groveling posture before the altar, draped her robes about her, and took her in his arms.

A wailing cry, rising gradually to an incensed roar, echoed and reverberated through the vaulted chamber, and de Grandin thrust the unconscious girl into my hands. "Mon Dieu," he exclaimed, "I did forget. Le petit garcon!"

Crouched as close to the wall as he could get, we found the little lad, tears of surprising size streaming down his fat cheeks as his little mouth opened wide and emitted wail after broken-hearted wail. "Hola, my little cabbage, mon brave soldat!" de Grandin soothed him, stretching out his hands to the weeping youngster. "Come with me. Come, we shall clothe you warmly against the cold and pop you into a bed of feathers, and tomorrow morning we return you to your mother's arms."

Panting under my burden, for she was no light weight, I bore Dunroe O'Shane up the long, tortuous flight of steps.

"Morphine is indicated here, if I do not mistake," de Grandin remarked as we laid the girl on her bed.

"But we haven't any—" I began, only to be checked by his grin.

"Oh, but we have," he contradicted. "I foresaw something like this was likely to come about, and abstracted a quantity of the drug, together with a syringe, from your surgery before we left home."

When we had administered the narcotic, we set out for our own chamber, the little boy, warmly bundled in blankets, held tightly in de Grandin's arms. At a nod from the Frenchman we paused at Dunroe's studio, lighted several candles and inspected her work. Fairly spread upon her drawing-board was a pretty little scene—a dimpled little boy crowing and smiling in his mother's lap, a proud and happy father leaning over them, and in the foregound a group of

rough bucolics kneeling in smiling adoration. "Why, the influence, whatever it was, seems to have left her before we went down those secret stairs!" I exclaimed, looking admiringly at the drawing.

"Do you say so?" de Grandin asked as he bent closer to inspect the picture. "Look here, if you please, my friend."

Bringing my eyes within a few inches of the board on which the Christmas scene was sketched, I saw, so faint it was hardly to be found unless the beholder looked for it, another picture, lightly sketched in jerky, uneven lines, depicting another scene—a vaulted chapel with walls lined by armed men, two of whom held a child's body horizontally before the altar, while a woman, clothed only in her long, trailing hair, plunged a wicked, curve-bladed knife into the little one's body, piercing the heart.

"Good Lord!" I exclaimed, in horror.

"Precisely," agreed Jules de Grandin. "The good Lord inspired talent in the poor girl's hand, but the powers of darkness dictated that sketch. Perhaps—I can not say for sure—she drew both the picture we see here, and the good one was formerly the faint one, but when I overcame the wicked ones, the wicked scene faded to insignificance and the pleasing one became predominant. It is possible, and—nom d'un nom!"

"What now?" I demanded as he turned a conscience-smitten face toward me and thrust the sleeping child into my arms.

"La chauve-souris—the bat!" he exclaimed. "I did forget the poor one's sufferings in the stress of greater things. Take the little man to our room, and soothe him, my friend. Me, I go down those ten-thousand-times-damned stairs to that never-enough-to-be-cursed chapel and put the poor brute out of its misery!"

"You mean you're actually going into that horrible place again?" I demanded.

"Eh bien, why not?" he asked.

"Why—those terrible men—those—" I began, but he stopped me.

"My friend," he asked as he extracted a cigarette from his dressing gown pocket and lighted it nonchalantly, "have you not yet learned that when Jules de Grandin kills a thing—be it man or be it devil—it is dead? There is nothing there which could harm a new-born fly, I do solemnly assure you."

VIII

JULES DE GRANDIN poured out a couple of tablespoonfuls of brandy into a wide-mouthed glass and passed the goblet under his nose, sniffing appreciatively. "Not at all, cher ami. From the first I did suspect there was something not altogether right about that house.

"To begin, you will recall that on the night Monsieur Van Riper took us from the station he told us his progenitor had imported the house, stone by single stone, to this country from Cyprus?"

"Yes," I nodded.

"Very good. The stones of which it is erected were probably quarried from the ruins of some heathen temple, and like sponges soaked in water, they were full to overflowing with evil influences. This evil undoubtedly affected the old warrior knights who dwelt in that house, probably from 1191, when Richard of England sold Cyprus to their order, to 1308, when the French king and the Roman pope suppressed and destroyed the order—and shared its riches between them.

"That the souls of those old monks who had forsaken their vows to the God of Love to serve the Goddess of Lust with unclean rites and ceremonies could not find rest in peaceful graves there is little doubt. But that they were able to materialize and carry on the obscenities they had practiced in life, there is also much doubt. Some ghosts there are who can make themselves visible at will; others can materialize at certain times and in certain places only; others can show themselves only with the aid of a medium.

"When the rich Monsieur Profiteer took up the old house and brought it to America, he doubtless imported all its evil influences intact; but they were latent.

"Then, only one little week ago, that which was needful came to the house. It was nothing less than Mademoiselle O'Shane's so beautiful self. She, my friend, is what the

spiritualists call a sensitive, a psychic. She is attuned to the fine vibrations which affect the ordinary person not at all. She was the innocent medium through which the wicked knights were able to effect a reincarnation.

"The air may be filled with the ethereal waves from a thousand broadcasting stations, but if you have not a radio machine to entrap and consilidate those waves into sound, you are helpless to hear so much as a single squeal of static. Is it not so? Very good. Mademoiselle Dunroe was the radio set—the condenser and the amplifying agent needed to release the invisible wickedness which came from Cytherea's wicked altar—the discarnate intelligences which were once bad men. Do you not recall how she was greeted in the chapel of the Black Lodge: 'Hail, Priestess and Queen—She Who Gives Her Servants Life and Being? Those wicked things which once were men admitted their debt to her in that salutation, my friend.

"Remember how Mademoiselle Dunroe told you of her inability to draw what she wished? The evil influences were already beginning to steal her brain and make her pliable to their base desires. They were beginning to lay plans to feed upon her vitality to clothe themselves in the semblance of humanity, and as they possessed her, she saw with her inward eye the scenes so many times heretofore enacted in that chapel.

"From the first I liked not the house, and when the poor Mademoiselle Dunroe told us of her troubles with her drawings, I liked it still less. How long it would have taken those old secret worshippers of evil to make themselves visible by the use of Mademoiselle Dunroe's vitality, I do not know. Perhaps they might never have succeeded. Perhaps she would have gone away and nothing more would have been heard of them, but that flap-eared she-ass of a Mademoiselle Prettybridge played the precise game the long-dead villains desired. When she held her so absurd seance in the dining-room that night, she furnished them just the atmosphere they needed to place their silent command in Mademoiselle O'Shane's mind. Her attention was fixed on ghostly things; 'Ah-ha,' says the master of the Black Lodge, 'now we shall steal her mind. Now we shall make her go into a trance like a medium, and she shall materialize us, and la, la, what deviltry we shall do!' And so they did. While they sent one of their number to thump upon the table and hold us spell-bound listening to his nonsense rimes, the rest of them became material and rode forth upon their phantom steeds to steal them a little child. Oh, my friend, I dare not think what would have been had they carried through that dreadful blood-sacrifice. Warm blood acts upon the wicked spirits as tonic acts on humans. They might have become so strong, no power on earth could have stayed them! As it was, the ancient evil could be killed, but it died very, very hard."

"Was Dunroe under their influence when we saw her at the piano that night?" I asked.

"Undoubtedly. Already they had made her draw things she did not consciously understand; then, when they had roused her from her bed and guided her to the instrument, she played first a composition of beauty, for she is a good girl at heart, but they wished her to play something evil. No doubt the wicked, lecherous tune she played under their guidance that night helped mightily to make good, Godfearing Dunroe O'Shane forget herself and serve as heathen priestess before the heathen altar of a band of forsworn renegade priests."

"H'm," I murmured dubiously. "Granting your premises, I can see the logic of your conclusions, but how was it you put those terrible ghosts to flight so easily?"

"I waited for that question," he answered. "Have you not yet learned Jules de Grandin is a very clever fellow?

"Attend me, for what I say is worth hearing. When those evil men went forth in search of prey and killed the poor policeman, I said to me, "Jules de Grandin, you have here a tough nut, indeed!"

" 'I know it,' I reply.

" 'Very well, then,' I ask me, 'who are these goblin child-stealers?'

" 'Ghosts—or the evil representations of wicked men who died long years ago in mortal sin,' I return.

" 'Now,' I say, 'you are sure these men are

materialized by Mademoiselle O'Shane—her strange playing, her unwitting drawings. What, then, is such a materialization composed of?"

" 'Of what some call ectoplasm, others psychoplasm,' I reply.

" 'But certainly'—I will not give myself peace till I have talked this matter over completely—'but what is that psychoplasm, or ectoplasm? Tell me that?'

"And then, as I think, and think some more, I come to the conclusion it is but a very fine form of vibration given off by the medium, just as the ether-waves are given off by the broadcasting station. When it combines with the thin-unpowerful vibration set up by the evil entity to be materialized, it makes the outward seeming of a man—what we call a ghost.

"I decided to try a desperate experiment. A sprig of the Holy Thorn of Glastonbury may be efficacious as a charm, but charms are of no avail against an evil which is very old and very powerful. Nevertheless, I will try the Holy Thorn-bush. If it fail, I must have a second line of defense. What shall it be?

"Why not radium salt? Radium does wonderful things. In its presence non-conductors of electricity become conductors; Leyden jars cannot retain their charges of electricity in its presence. For why? Because of its tremendous vibration. If I uncover a bit of radium bromide from its lead box in that small, enclosed chapel, the terrific bombardment of the Alpha, Tau and Gamma rays it gives off as its atoms disintegrate will shiver those thin-vibration ghosts to nothingness even as the Boche shells crushed the forts of Liege!

"I think I have an idea—but I am not sure it will work. At any rate, it is worth trying. So, while Mademoiselle O'Shane lies unconscious under the influence of evil, I rush here with you, borrow a tiny little tube of radium bromide from the City Hospital, and make ready to fight the evil ones. Then, when we follow *Mademoiselle Dunroe into* that accursed chapel under the earth, I am ready to make the experiment.

"At the first door stands the boy, who was not so steeped in evil as his elders, and he succumbed to the Holy Thorn sprig. But once inside the chapel, I see we need something which will batter those evil spirits to shreds, so I unseal my tube of radium, and—pouf! I shake them to nothing in no time!"

"But won't they ever haunt the Cloisters again?" I persisted.

"Ah bah, have I not said I have destroyed them—utterly?" he demanded. "Let us speak of them no more."

And with a single prodigious gulp he emptied his goblet of brandy.

The Eyrie

(*Continued from page* 8)

Join the ranks of the Undead! It doesn't cost anything anyway! Well, the sun is coming up, must hurry back to my cellar.

T. A. B. White
3 Vine Street
Cutler Heights
Bradford, England

The Editor, WEIRD TALES
9 Rockefeller Plaza, New York 20, N. Y.

I have just read your magazine for the first time, and found it has impressed me very much. I dare say it's one of the best magazines of its kind published.

I think everyone should read W. T. because it's a little different than the every day literature; it's especially good for the Joe who is of the adventurous type. I feel that everyone has a spark of adventure in his or her system; but does not realize it, or is afraid to pursue it. Through your magazine they can enter the realm of the strange and the terrifying in their own living room for a small sum of money and have no fears.

Keep up the good work.

Clifford V. Doerfer
Union City, N. J.

The Mermaid

By LEAH BODINE DRAKE

FLASHING through facets of her glassy world
The many-chambered sea, cold mermaid rises,
For a lean shadow now obliquely moves
Across her rippled roof.

Up, up, up from her hollowed water-land,
Up convoluted stairways of her restless house
The mermaid mounts, shaking her dangerous hair,
And see! she spreads before the vessel's bow
Her gold-green locks and scarlet seaweed crown,
Her pearly-pale half-body of a girl
Cupped in its husk of opalescent scale.

Who flushes red, and leaps, and in her arms
Sinks with a bubbled cry of fear and joy,
But he the youngest of the gaping crew?
O call in vain to your lost brother, fling the net,
Tough powerless fishers straining desperate-eyed
Against the dripping side!
Then bid the women on the hungry shore
Raise the wild keen and wring their empty hands!

Far out the mermaid, tired of her play,
Lets her chill toy drift weathercock, supine,
In hammocks of the swinging tides, while she
Flicks a bright fin and darts to comb her curls
Among rough water-rocks off Brittany.

Illustration by Boris Dolgov

. . . something, somebody was there in that sound-proof room thirty stories above the street.

The Chain

BY HAMILTON CRAIGIE

I

QUARRIER entered the taxi with an uneasy sense of crisis.

He was not imaginative; his digestion was excellent; even at forty, an age when most men nowadays have begun to feel the strain of fierce business competition, Quarrier was almost the man that he had been ten years in the past.

Nerves and Quarrier were strangers; he smoked his after-dinner cigar in a rigorous

Heading by Jon Arfstrom

self-denial that made it his sole dissipation; he was in bed and asleep when other men were comfortably faring forth in search of such diversion as the metropolis had to offer.

But the face of that taxi-driver—he had seen it somewhere before. It was a dark, Italian face, with high cheekbones, and a straight, cruel mouth, like a wedge, between lean cheeks scarred and scabbed with late-healed cicatrices and pocked blue with powder burns.

Not an inviting face. And the taxi was old. Glancing at the cushions, as they had roared past a light at the street corner, Quarrier had thought to see the dingy leather sown thick with stains, broad patches, as if —as if . . .

But pshaw! As he told himself, he was getting fanciful; perhaps his liver, at last, had played him false. A migraine, doubtless —he'd have a look in on old Peterby in the morning. Peterby was a good, plain old-fashioned practitioner—no nonsense about him . . .

He had gone to the offices of the Intervale Steel Company on a mission, an important one. As a matter of fact, it was vital—almost a matter of life and death. But he smiled grimly now in the dark recesses of the cab as he reflected that, as it chanced, his last-minute decision had left those documents where they would be beyond the reach of—Hubert Marston, for instance.

He had nothing on his person of any special value; he would be poor picking, indeed, if, as it chanced, that taxi driver with the face of a bravo might, behind the sinister mask that was his face, be the thug he seemed, hired, perhaps, by the Panther of Peacock Alley.

An extravagant appellation, doubtless, but that was Marston: Suave, sinister, debonair—the social routourier equally with the manipulator. He had acquired the name naturally enough, for most of his operations were carried on in the hotels and clubs.

He had an office hard by the "Alley" and it was from its ornate splendor that he issued, on occasion, gardenia in buttonhole, cane hooked over his arm, dark face with its inscrutable smile flashing upon the habitues with what meaning only he could say. And he did not choose to tell.

And Marston had wanted those documents: they spelled the difference to him between durance and liberty—aye, between life and death . . .

For Hubert Marston had made the one slip that, soon or late, the most careful criminal makes. He had, yielding on a sudden to his one rare impulse of hate, commissioned the murder of a man who stood in his way, and—he had paid for it, as he had thought, in good crisp treasury notes, honest as the day, certainly! But the payment had been made at second, or third-hand—that was Marston's way. And for once it had betrayed him.

For those documents—as he had found out, too late—were counterfeit treasury notes. The go-between had seen to that, paying the hired killer with them, and pocketing the genuine. And Quarrier, himself the watch-dog of those interests that Marston would have despoiled (he had been retained by them for some time now as their private investigator) had found, first, the disgruntled bravo himself, obtained the spurious notes, together with the man's confession, traced them backward to the go-between—and now, hard upon the arch-criminal's heels, he waited only for the morning, and that which would follow.

Quarrier had given the driver a number in the West Eighties, but now, glancing from the window, his eyes narrowed with a sudden, swift concern.

"The devil!" he ejaculated, under his breath. "Now, if I thought—"

But the sentence was never completed. They were in a narrow, unfamiliar street; a street silent, tenantless, as it seemed, save for dark doorways, and here and there a furtive, drifting shadow-shape—the tall fronts of warehouses, with blind eyes to the night, silent, grim.

The echoing roar of the engine beat in a swift clamor against those iron walls—and suddenly, with a sort of click, he remem-

bered where it was he had seen that lupine countenance—the dark face of the driver separated from him by the width of a single pane of glass.

It had been behind glass that he had seen it. A month or so previous, at the invitation of his friend, Gregory Vinson, captain of detectives (with whom he had formerly been associated, prior to his present connection) he had visited headquarters; and it had been there, in the gallery which is given over to rogues, that he had marked that face, its features, even among the many crooks, thugs, strong-arm men, yeggs, hoisters, pennyweighters, housemen, and scratchers. And now he remembered it when it was too late!

His right hand falling upon the butt of a blunt-nosed automatic, with which he was never without, with his left he jerked strongly at the handle of the door. But the door was locked; he could not open it.

Quarrier had been in a tight place more than once; danger he was not unacquainted with; it had been with him in broad daylight, in darkness, grinning at his elbow with dirk or pistol in the highways and byways of Criminopolis. He was a fighter—or he would not have won to the possession of those documents—the documents so greatly desired by Hubert Marston, the evidence of the one false step made by the Master of Chicane, the one slip that was to put him, ere the setting of another sun, where he would be safe.

Now Quarrier, his mouth a grim line, was reaching with the butt of his automatic to break the glass when, with a grinding of brakes the taxi whirled suddenly to a groaning halt.

The door swung open—to the windy night without, and the glimmer of a dark face at the curb.

"Here you are, sir," Quarrier heard the voice, with, he was certain, a mocking quality in the quasi-deferential cadence. But he could see merely the face, behind it a black well of darkness, velvet black, save for the dim loom of a lofty building just across.

Quarrier did not know how many there might be, lurking there in the blackness, nor did he greatly care. The locked door; the face of the man at the wheel; the unfamiliar street—shanghaied by a land pirate, at the very least! No doubt of it.

But it was no time for hesitation. If he were in the wrong, and it was all a mistake—well, he could afford to pay. But—the face of Marston arose before him, suave, sinister, smiling. . . . What was it the man had said, on the occasion of their last meeting at the Intervale offices:

"Possession, my dear Quarrier—possession is nine points of the lawless. Remember that!"

Quarrier remembered, and with the remembrance came a swift, sudden anger. But it was an anger that was controlled, as a flame is controlled—though it was none the less deadly.

"Here you are, sir," repeated the voice, and now there was in it a something more than mockery. There was an edge, a rasp; almost it sounded like a command, an order.

Quarrier grinned then—a mere facial contraction of the lips. Then, muscle and mind and body, in one furious projectile, he launched himself outward through the doorway in a diving tackle.

The white face with its sneering grin was blotted out; there came the spank of a clean-cut blow; a turgid oath. Quarrier, rising from his knees, surveyed the limp figure on the cobbles with a twisted smile; then he turned, peering under his hand down a long tunnel of gloom, where, at the far end, a light showed, like a will-o-the-wisp beckoning him on.

He could not tell where he was. Somewhere in the Forties, he judged—Hell's Kitchen, probably—although there was a curious lack of the life and movement boiling to full tide in that grim neighborhood of battle, murder, and sudden death.

But as his eyes became accustomed to the stifling dark he found the reason. It was a street of warehouses, public stores; and further on, as he looked, like a ribbon of pale flame against the violet sky, he saw the river.

He bent his steps away from it, walking carefully, picking his way on the uneven flagging. Twice, as he went forward, it seemed to him that he was watched—that eyes gazed at him out of the blackness; and twice he turned his head, swiftly to face the silence and the emptiness of the long, lonely way.

And it seemed, too, that as he went, the whispering echo of his hasty steps went on before him, and behind; he fell to counting them—and suddenly he knew. They were before him—and behind. He was in a trap.

"There he is. Now—go get 'im!"

And it was then that Quarrier, reaching for his pistol, discovered that it was gone; lost, doubtless, in that encounter with the taxi-driver. But he braced, spreading his arms wide as a grizzly meets the onslaught of wolves. But the wolves were many, and they came on now, a ravening pack; one, before the rest, looming as a black dot against the starshine, lunged forward with a growling oath.

The rest were yet some little distance away. Quarrier saw the man, or, rather, he sensed the nearness of that leaning shadow, spread-eagled like a bat against the dimness. Then there came the sudden impact of fist on flesh—a straining heave—and Quarrier, diving under the hurtling figure, straightened, and hurled him outward and away.

The flying figure struck among the rest, head on, to a growling chorus of oaths, imprecations.

But still they came on, thrusting, lunging, a gun crashed almost in Quarrier's face . . . There came a voice:

"No shooting, you fool! Th' Big Gun says—"

The rest was lost as the pistol clattered to the cobbles. The center of a whirling tangle of fist and foot, to Quarrier it seemed that he fought in a nightmare that would have no end. He had gone to one knee under the impact of a swinging blow, when, from the far distance, there sounded the rolling rattle of a night-stick, with the clang of the patrol.

Something gripped his ankle—something at once soft and hard. He lunged, full length, as a football player at the last desperate urge of his spent strength. Then he was on his feet, running, sidestepping, circling with the skill and desperate effort of a plunging half-back, stiff-arming the opposition to right and left.

Just ahead, the black maw of an alley, a deeper blot of blackness, loomed. In its heart, like a witch-fire, there swam upward a nebulous, faint glow as from the pit; out of the tail of his eye he saw it: The dim loom of a house, and an open door.

He reached the turn—and a figure uprose before him, even in that darkness brutish, broad, thewed like a grizzly. The great arm rose, once; it fell, like the hammer of Thor.

Quarrier lurched, stiffened, buckling inward at the knees in a loose-jointed, slumping fall.

II

QUARRIER came to himself, all his faculties at full tide.

It was smothering dark—a darkness not merely of the night but of a prisonhouse, silent, musty with the stale odor of decay and death. Near at hand, after a moment, he heard a slow, ceaseless dripping, like the beating of a heart, or the slow drip-drip of a life that was running out, drop by single drop.

The fancy seemed logical enough; there seemed nothing of the fantastic in it; Quarrier waited, there in the smothering dark, for the quick knife-thrust that would mean the end—or the deadening impact of the slung-shot.

But, unimaginative as he was, like a man who has but lately undergone the surgeon's scalpel, he feared to move to feel, even while he assured himself that he was unhurt save for the throbbing in his temples, and the very bruises that he felt upon him, but would not touch.

But there was something else. After a little his hesitant, exploring finger found it. The length of line bent in a sort of run-

ning bowline about his shoulders and arms. And behind him, from a staple in the wall, it hung, sliding like a snake in the thick darkness.

He moved his head, slowly, carefully, like a man testing himself for an invisible hurt. And then—

"Ha!" he breathed, deep in his throat, the shadow of a cry. For, moving an inch further to the right, it would have been a noose, tightening as he moved, strangling him there, choking him out of sound and sense.

Brave as he was, Quarrier shivered, his shoulders twitching with the thought. And it was not cold. Moving with an infinite caution, he ran his exploring fingers along the hempen strands.

Whoever had devised that noose had been a sailor. And only a sailor could undo it.

And there in the dark, trussed as he was, at the mercy of what other peril he knew not, Quarrier permitted himself the ghost of a grin. His hand went up, slowly, carefully, the fingers busy with the rope; there came a tug, and, coiling at his feet like a snake, the noose slid slithering along the stones.

Quarrier was not a praying man, in the ordinary sense, but now he sent heavenward a silent aspiration of gratitude for the impulse which, years previous, had prompted his signing on as a foremast hand in the China seas. And the long hours in the doldrums, below the line, had, as it proved, been anything but wasted.

NOW, easing his cramped muscles in a preliminary stretching, he rose gingerly to his feet, moving with the stealth and caution of an Indian. He was free of that constricting rope, but as he moved forward, groping, just ahead there came to him a sudden murmur of voices, low, like the growling of savage beasts. There was that sort of corridor, at the far end of which proceeded the voices. It had all been done in the dark, so to speak. The taxi, that driver with the face familiar and yet unfamiliar, the attack, and now this. But time pressed. Why they had not murdered him out of hand he did not pause to consider; he knew only that Marston—and he was certain that it was Marston's hand that had been in it—would, with a clear field, be at the hiding-place of those documents. Even now, doubtless, he was there.

Quarrier felt mechanically for his pistol; and then his hand dropped hopelessly as he remembered that he was weaponless.

He listened tensely, holding his breath, as the voices receded—or, rather, one of them; he could hear the other following the departing man with his complaints.

Evidently they had left a guard or two. One of them was going; the other left behind, and not especially delighted with his job.

An abrupt turn of the long hallway brought this man suddenly into plain view.

Quarrier blinked in the glare from the single incandescent, flattening himself against the wall; then, with a pantherish speed, he had covered the intervening space in three lunging strides.

The man, a broad fellow with a seamed, lead-colored countenance, turned his head; his mouth opened, his hand going to his pocket with a lightning stab of the blunt, hairy fingers.

But Quarrier had wasted no time. Even as the giant reached for his gun Quarrier's fist swung in a short arc, and there was power in it. The blow, traveling a scant six inches, crashed full on the point; the thick-set man, his eyes glazing, swayed, slipped, fell in an aimless huddle.

"Well—a knockout!" panted Quarrier, reaching for the pistol.

MARSTON was the "Big Gun," of course. Quarrier had never doubted it; but hitherto the President of Intervale Steel had conducted his brokerage business, on the surface at any rate, without resort to open violence. And Intervale Steel—you knew really nothing about it until you took a flyer in it; then, as it might chance, you knew enough and more than enough.

Quarrier, glancing at the unconscious man and pocketing the pistol, departed

without more ado; proceeding along the hall, he found, with no further adventure, a narrow door, and the pale stars, winking at him from, he judged, a midnight horizon.

But a glance at his watch told him that it was but nine-thirty; there was yet time to get to the hiding-place of those documents ahead of Marston, if, as he was now convinced, it had been Marston's thugs who had ambushed him.

Plunging along the shadowy alley, after five minutes' walk, made at a racing gait, he found a main-traveled avenue and an owl taxi, whose driver, leaning outward, crooked a finger in invitation to this obvious fare, appearing out of the dark.

Quarrier did not hesitate. The fellow might be a gunman or worse; he must take his chance of that.

"Twenty-three Jones!" he called crisply, with the words diving into the cab's interior; then, his head out of the window, as the taxi turned outward from the curb:

"And drive as if all hell were after you!"

III

QUARRIER reached his destination without incident, but as he went up the winding stairway of the office building to his private sanctum he was oppressed by an uneasy sense that all was not as it should be. Those elevators—they were seldom out of order. Perhaps. . . .

But, panting a little from his climb, he found his floor, and the door of his private office.

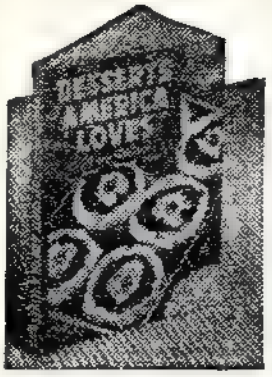
For just a split second he hesitated; then, unlocking the door, he flung it wide and went in.

And then, for the third time that evening, he had another shock: for, almost from the moment of his entry into that sound-proof chamber, he knew that he was not alone.

For a moment, there in the blaze from the electrolier, lighted by the opening of the door, he stood rigid, listening, holding his breath, crouched, bent forward like a sprinter upon his mark.

You'll Love These NEW

DESSERT IDEAS!



Fluffy cakes and crunchy cookies—tingling frozen desserts—melt-in-your-mouth confections—steamed, chilled and baked puddings with tasty sauces—frosty and piping hot beverages—and many other taste-proved recipes to add the final touch to your parties or every-day meals. DESSERTS AMERICA LOVES by Mary Wilson is a guide-book to cookery compliments! Perfect gift, too! Plastic binding, $1.95; cloth, $2.75.

COOKING WITH MAGIC

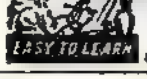
There's sheer enchantment in cooking with the "magic ingredient"—sour cream! Over 400 low-cost recipes are in this book—from down-to-earth apple pie and baked chicken to exotic dishes such as Borscht, Chlodnik and Blini. By Sumption and Ashbrook.....$3.95

FREE 10 Days' Examination

CHAS. A. BENNETT CO., Inc.
7012 Burns Bldg., Peoria, Ill.
Send: ☐ DESSERTS AMERICA LOVES ☐ (cloth) ☐ (plastic) ☐ COOKING WITH MAGIC
☐ $..... enclosed. ☐ Send C.O.D. ☐ Send for down.

Name.....
Address.....
City..... State.....

Thrilling Work COLORING PHOTOS

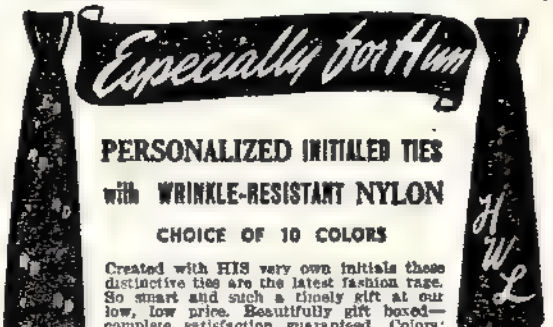


EASY TO LEARN

Fascinating vocation learned at home by those with aptitude. Thrilling positions. Minimal method brings out life-like colors. Free booklet.
NATIONAL PHOTO COLORING SCHOOL
835 Diversey Pkwy., Dept. 1317, Chicago 14

Especially for Him

PERSONALIZED INITIALED TIES
with WRINKLE-RESISTANT NYLON
CHOICE OF 10 COLORS



Created with HIS very own initials these distinctive ties are the latest fashion rage. So smart and such a timely gift at our low, low price. Beautifully gift boxed—complete satisfaction guaranteed. Colors: Navy, Royal Blue, Grey, Hunter Green, Maroon, Red, Rust, Beige, Brown, Maize. $3.00 EACH

Indicate style A or B when ordering. Print initials clearly. Enclose check or money order. No C. O. D.'s please.

QUALITY AGENCY
214 East 49th St., New York, N. Y.

Please send me postpaid.....Personalized Initialed Tie (s). I enclose $.....☐ Check ☐ Money Order
Initials are .....
Style ..... Color.....
NAME .....
ADDRESS .....
CITY ..... ZONE.... STATE.....
(Sorry, no C.O.D.'s) 10-52

AMAZING VALUE!
Save Up To $11.50 With This New AUTOMATIC
CIGARETTE LIGHTER!
Imagine! The same style lighter you've seen for as much as $12.50 yours now for only $1.00! Slim, modern case in gleaming chrome finish is suitable for engraving. Double size fluid well. Fully automatic flick-of-a-finger safety action. Order several . . . NOW! Satisfaction guaranteed or your money back.
ONLY $1 Postpaid (No C.O.D.'s)
ORDER NOW!
M. MARTIN & CO., Dept. A-1
5 So. Wabash Ave.
Chicago 3, Ill.
Please send, postpaid, ... lighters @ $1 each. I am enclosing $..... full payment.
Name .....
Address .....
City ..... Zone.... State.....

WANT TO MAKE REAL MONEY?
YOU CAN POSITIVELY MAKE $50
SELL a brand new item going to every type of food and beverage store, factories, laboratories, hospitals, etc. Sustained by national publicity program.
SAMPLES FURNISHED
UTILITY DURAWEAR CO.
83 W. Jackson Blvd., Dept PFG-11, Chicago 4, Ill.

ACCOUNTANT
BECOME AN EXPERT
Executive Accountants and C. P. A's earn $4,000 to $10,000 a year. Thousands of firms need them. We train you thoroly at home in spare time for C. P. A's examinations or executive accounting positions. Previous experience unnecessary. Personal training under supervision of staff of C. P. A's. Placement counsel and help. Write for free book, "Accountancy the Profession That Pays."
LASALLE Extension University, 417 So. Dearborn St.
A Correspondence Institution Dept. 10334H, Chicago 5, Ill.

Learn Profitable Profession in 90 days at Home
MEN AND WOMEN, 18 TO 60. Swedish Massage graduates make big money working full or spare time with doctors or in hospitals, health resorts, sanatoriums, clubs, private practice. A dignified interesting career! Quality for your graduation certificate. Thorough instruction at home as in class rooms. Write for Illustrated Book—FREE!
The College of Swedish Massage
Dept. 298-M, 41 E. Pearson, Chicago 11

LAW
STUDY AT HOME for Business Success and LARGER PERSONAL EARNINGS, 43 years expert instruction—over 114,000 students enrolled. LL.B. Degree awarded. All text material furnished. Easy payment plan. Send for FREE BOOK—"Law and Executive Guidance"—NOW!
AMERICAN EXTENSION SCHOOL OF LAW
Dept. B-55, 646 N. Michigan Ave., Chicago 11, Illinois

Store Route Plan PAYS BIG MONEY
SELL COUNTER CARD PRODUCTS
Build a good-paying business of your own. Call on retailers of all kinds; supply nationally advertised Aspirin, Cosmetics, Razor Blades and 200 other necessities. Big values at 5c and 10c to $1. High quality. Attractive displays sell fast. Free book of facts. Write!
World's Products Co., Dept. 99-P, Spencer, Ind.

Quarrier was a big man, and well muscled; in his day he had been an amateur boxer of repute. For a big man, he was quick, well-poised, supple and controlled.

A brain of ice and nerves of steel—that was Quarrier. And at that moment he stood in need of them.

He had heard nothing, felt nothing, seen nobody—and yet he knew, beyond any possibility of doubt, that someone or something was with him there in that soundproof chamber, thirty stories above the street. And the knowledge—as certain as the fact that he, Quarrier, as yet lived and breathed—the knowledge that he was not alone was not reassuring. It was fantastic, it was incredible—but it was true!

Everything in that private office was in plain sight; shelter there was none for any possible intruder; and yet, by the very positive evidence of his eyes he knew, and his pulses quickened at the thought, that he was not alone.

It had been Quarrier's fancy to use the small suite on the top floor of the out-of-the-way office building. He liked the view; the rooms were remote; they suited his purpose; they were private. Anything could happen here, and no one be the wiser: the crash of a heavy .48, for instance, would not penetrate an inch outward beyond those sound-proof walls. And a cry, a shout would be lost there-just as a stone is lost, dropped downward into a deep well of silence—and of oblivion.

Now, if Quarrier's man, Harrison, a soft-footed, super-efficient body-servant, had not kept on his hat; or if, say, he had not had a particularly abundant shock of hair, added to the fact that although an excellent servant, he was somewhat deaf; and if, too, he had not for once, walked and worked in deviousness—this chronicle would have had a very different ending—for Quarrier, at any rate.

His hand in the pocket of his coat, the fingers curled about the butt of the automatic that he had taken from the guard back there in the cellar, Quarrier, frowning, surveyed the room in a slow, searching appraisal. Those documents—he had to

NOW, the pipe smoker's dream come true!

Every Pipefull Proves . . .

DR. PHILIP'S PIPE IS THE BEST!

The ideal pipe for the STEADY SMOKER, the NEW SMOKER and the man who doesn't like an ordinary pipe.

- NO BREAKING IN!
- READY-MADE CAKE!
- DOUBLE COOLING ACTION!
- CANNOT BURN THROUGH!
- FEATHER-WEIGHT!
- FLAT BASE, WILL NOT TIP!
- FINEST QUALITY IMPORTED BRIAR!
- INTERCHANGEABLE CERAMIC FILTER BOWLS!

This cross section shows the interchangeable inner ceramic bowl which burns tobacco dry, cool and clean. The bowl acts as a non-burning sponge that absorbs all of the tar and most of the nicotine. The metal radiator ring on top of the Dr. Philip's pipe is the only part that can get hot. It takes the heat from the ceramic and gives it off to the air FAST. The smoke circulates in the space between the inner bowl and the outer briar shell, becoming COOL before you draw it. Your tobacco cannot get wet because cotton or paper tissue packed in the space below the inner bowl absorbs all of the saliva and condensation. Rotate the ceramic bowls over and over again as you would a set of ordinary pipes. Dr. PHILIP'S pipe is EASY to CLEAN. There is no need to knock this pipe against any object to get out the ash. It does not form a cake. There is no need to rest the Dr. PHILIP'S pipe for cooling or drying. It has a constant capacity. The SHORT SMOKE MODEL will hold enough tobacco for a pleasure packed smoke of 15 to 25 minutes and the LONG SMOKE MODEL will last from 45 minutes to a full hour!

THE LONGER LASTING PIPE—YOU GET 4 EXTRA BOWLS!

SHORT SMOKE MODEL
Including 4 EXTRA BOWLS **only $4.50**

LONG SMOKE MODEL
Including 4 EXTRA BOWLS **only $5.50**

If not satisfied that this is the most amazing pipe you have ever owned, return within ten days and your money will be refunded!

QUALITY AGENCY
214 East 49th Street
New York 17, New York

Please send me postpaid.....DR. PHILIP'S pipe(s). I enclose $..... to cover the cost of the pipe(s) I have checked below.

☐ SHORT SMOKE MODEL including 4 EXTRA BOWLS @ $4.50
☐ LONG SMOKE MODEL including 4 EXTRA BOWLS @ $5.50

NAME .....

ADDRESS .....

CITY ..... ZONE.... STATE.....
(Sorry, no C.O.D.'s) 10-52

YOU can acquire LAW NIGHTS AT HOME! L.L.B. DEGREE

Legally trained men win higher positions and bigger success in business and public life. Greater opportunities now than ever before.

More Ability: More Prestige: More Money. We guide you step by step. You can train at home during spare time. Degree of LL.B. We furnish all text material, including 14-volume Law Library. Low cost, easy terms. Get our valuable 48-page "Law Training for Leadership" and "Evidence" books FREE. Send NOW.

LASALLE EXTENSION UNIVERSITY, 417 South Dearborn Street
A Correspondence Institution Dept 10334L Chicago 5, Ill.

Learn to MOUNT BIRDS

Tan SKINS, make up FURS

Be a Taxidermist. Double your hunting fun. We teach you at Home. Mount Birds, Animals, Fish, Heads, common specimens. Fun and profits. Decorate home and den MAKE MONEY. Mount game, tan for others. Big profits in spare time. WRITE TODAY.

100 game pictures in FREE BOOK. Hunters, get your copy. It's Now Free. Send post card. State your AGE.

FREE BOOK

NORTHWESTERN SCHOOL OF TAXIDERMY
Dept. 4210 Omaha, Nebraska

Learn BAKING At Home

Baking is one of America's high industries in wages. Nearly depression-proof. Thorough basic home course lays sound foundation. If you have aptitude, write for FREE BOOKLET, "Opportunities in Commercial Baking."
National Baking School, 835 Diversey Pkwy, Dpt 1937, Chicago 14

HOW TO COURT A GIRL SUCCESSFULLY

5,000 word booklet of hints on dating, grooming, letter writing and the age old question, "What age to marry". For Men and Women. Send 25c in coin in plain wrapper or envelope to:

DORIS RAY
4207 W. Crystal Street Chicago 51, Illinois

Learn PHOTOGRAPHY at Home

Splendid opportunities. Prepare in spare time. Practical basic training. Long-established school. Send for free book, "Opportunities in Photography." No obligation. American School of Photography, 835 Diversey Pkwy., Dept 1417, Chicago 14, Ill.

FREE SAMPLE LESSON WATCHMAKING

CHICAGO SCHOOL OF WATCHMAKING
1606 Milwaukee, Dept. 8102, Chicago 47, Ill.

Show me without obligation how I can learn watch repairing at home. Rush free sample.

Name .....
Address .....
City ..... Z..... State.....

POKER CHECKS

Famous Hub Checks, Non-Duplicate, Square Edge, Heaviest Game Check, Cut and Stack Accurately. Supplied in any color.

FREE CATALOG Expose: The Open Book, Sealed Book, Scientific Betting, Master Key System, How to Control Fair Dice, Runup System, Plastic Playing Cards for Club Use.

"The Old Reliable"

K. C. CARD Co., 806 S. Wabash, Chicago 5

make certain of them.

From left to right, as his gaze went round the chamber, he saw a bookcase, a full-length canvas, done in oils, the double windows, a door, locked with a huge, old-fashioned key, leading into a lumber-room just beyond, a small wall safe, his desk—which completed the circle.

The room was in itself a safe. It was like a fort. The windows were protected by sheet-steel aprons similar to the burglar-guards used by bank tellers; the main entrance door, through which Quarrier had entered, and which opened upon the corridor and the elevators, was of steel, with a patent spring combination lock; the other door, leading to the lumber-room, was also of steel, locked, however, with a huge, old-fashioned key, but this latter door had never been in use since Quarrier's occupancy.

Nothing short of an acetylene blowpipe could have penetrated the walls, the ceiling, the floor, but they were smooth, unmarred by scratch or tell-tale stain.

Now, to understand events as they occurred:

Quarrier was in his private sanctum, his office; it adjoined the lumber-room at the right. The electrolier, blazing from its four nitro lamps, illumined every nook and cranny of that office; shed its blazing effulgence upon Quarrier, standing like a graven image before that wall safe. And as he stood there, for the first time in his well-ordered existence a prey to fear, a face rose out of his consciousness; he heard again the voice of Marston, President of Intervale Steel:

"You have them, my dear Quarrier; keep them—safe."

Quarrier had never liked Marston; the man was elusive, like an eel; you never saw his hand; it was impossible to guess what moved behind the masklike marble of his face, expressionless always, cold, contained.

But Quarrier had the "documents," or, rather, they were there, in that wall safe, in itself a small fort of chrome-nickel steel and manganese against which no mere

"can-opener" could have prevailed—no torch, even.

Now, as he operated the combination, he was abruptly sensible of a curious sensation of strain; a shock; the short hairs at the back of his neck prickled suddenly as if at the touch of an invisible, icy finger. And for a moment he could have sworn to a Presence just behind him—a something in ambush grinning at his back.

But with his fingers upon that dial, Quarrier half turned as if to depart. He was getting jumpy, his nerves out of hand—too much coffee and too many strong cigars, perhaps. That was it. That kidnapping; it might, after all, have had nothing to do with Marston. The documents were safe—they simply had to be. Unless Marston had been there, and gone.

Perhaps, too, Quarrier might have obeyed the impulsion of that turning movement, and in that case, also, this story would never have been written. Quarrier might have done this, but for the moment, practical and sanely balanced as he was, for a split second he had the fancy that if he turned his head he would see—something that was not good, that was not normal.

It was instinctive, elemental, rather than rational, and, getting himself in hand, he would, doubtless, have turned abruptly, leaving the room, if, at that moment, out of the tail of his eye, he had not seen the inescapable evidence of a presence other than his own.

IV

QUARRIER was a large man, and hard-muscled, a dangerous adversary in a rough-and-tumble, a "good man with his hands," as we have seen.

In the half of a second it came to him that Marston might have delegated his authority (at second or third-hand, certainly) to some peterman, some yegg, say, to obtain possession of those documents. But the fellow would have to be a safe cracker par excellence; that strongbox was the last word in safes, and, Quarrier was certain, the final one.

No ordinary house-man could hope to break into it, and the marauder would have to depend upon a finger sandpapered to the quick, hearing microscopically sensitive, to catch, through that barrier of steel, the whispering fall of those super-tumblers.

And abruptly following this suggestion, a second and a more daunting thought obtruded: Suppose—just suppose, that their design held no intention of an assault upon the safe; suppose that their plan, the purpose of that nameless, invisible Presence, had included, in the first place, him—Quarrier? In case, after all, he had managed to escape the trap back there in the cellar? Why—they would use him; that was it! They would force him to open the safe. The thing was simple; there was about it, even, a suggestion of sardonic humor, but it was a humor that did not appeal to Quarrier.

Upon the instant he swung round,

WEIRD—SCIENCE-FICTION—FANTASY
New and Out-of-Print Books
Mundy—Haggard—Wheatley—Griffith—etc.
Send for List
FANTASY BOOKS PURCHASED
S. B. MYERS
904 FOREST AVENUE ANN ARBOR, MICH.

WEIRD BOOKS
Weird, fantastic, and science-fiction books and back-dated magazines, bought and sold.
LOWEST PRICES *LIST FREE*
Werewolf Bookshop
Shannon Rd. R. D. 2, Box 84 Verona, Penn.

THE GREATEST OF ALL SCIENCE-FICTION STORIES
SURVIVAL and EXODUS
By ARTHUR J. BURKS
The world of the far, far future, after the United Nations of the World had combined to smash the greatest power of them all—the United States. For thirty-nine generations the descendants of the pitiful remnants of American culture lived underground in gigantic caverns, hunted by their conquerors above. This is their story. Out of print since its initial magazine appearance in 1938, now in book form for the first time. Two complete novels in one beautifully illustrated book. Limited edition, signed by the author.
$2.50
PEGASUS PUBLICATIONS
Box 2075, Buffalo 5, New York
Write for our complete catalog of science-fantasy fiction, free on request.

CHRONOGRAPH
DON'T RISK A RED CENT WITH
10 DAY FREE TRIAL
MEASURES DISTANCE
TELLS TIME
IT'S A
STOP WATCH!
• Anti-magnetic • Sweep Second Hand • Color Matched • Precision Jeweled • Shock Resistant • Expansion Band • Black or White Luminous Dial • Un-breakable Crystal
SNAKE EXPANSION BAND
Measures speed and distance! Stainless Steel Case! Ideal for all active men!
FULLY GUARANTEED
$7.95
SEND NO MONEY
Pay postman $7.95 plus 10% tax or mail only $8.75 and save postage.
IRA SALES Dept. 72
5684 West Fort Street
Detroit 9, Michigan

be an invisible reweaver
MAKE BIG MONEY AT HOME
Profitable hobby and trade—earn over $20 daily full or part time—repair cuts, tears, rips, burns in clothing or any fabric so hole can't be seen. Big profit, big demand—uncrowded field. Low-cost home-study course includes lifetime equipment. Easy-to-learn, pay-as-you-earn, income all your life. Details free. Send postcard today.
before
after
FABRICON CO. Dept. D
8342 S. Prairie Avenue, Chicago 19, Illinois

EAR ACHE?
DENT'S
EAR WAX DROPS for fast temporary relief of accumulated wax condition
TOOTHACHE?
ask your druggist for DENT'S TOOTH GUM, TOOTH DROPS or POULTICE

High School Course
at Home
Many Finish in 2 Years
Go as rapidly as your time and abilities permit. Course equivalent to resident school work — prepares for college entrance exams. Standard H. S. texts supplied. Diploma. Credit for H. S. subjects already completed. Single subjects if desired. High school education is very important for advancement in business and industry and socially. Don't be handicapped all your life. Be a High School graduate. Start your training now. Free Bulletin on request. No obligation.
American School Dept. H-749, Drexel at 58th, Chicago 37

MAKE EXTRA MONEY
EVERY BUSINESS EVERYWHERE
USES UNION LABEL BOOK MATCHES
No experience needed to earn big daily commissions. Be a direct factory representative of the world's largest exclusive UNION LABEL Book Match manufacturer. Prospects everywhere. Feature Glamour Girls, Hillbillies, scenics and dozens of other styles — Double Books — Jumbo Books — nearly 100 color combinations. New, bigger portfolio makes this fastest selling line a real profit maker for you. Write TODAY for full details
SUPERIOR MATCH CO.
Dept. S-1052 7528 S. Greenwood Ave., Chicago 19, Ill.
West Coast Salesmen, write Box 1067, San Jose, Calif.

crouching, his hand reaching to his pocket in a lightning stab, and coming up, level, holding the short-barrelled automatic.

Then his mouth twisted in a mirthless grin as his straining gaze beheld the square room empty under the lights.

A moment he stood, his keen, strong, thoughtful face etched deep with new lines of worry, ears strained against the singing silence. He began the circuit of the room. Walking on tip-toe, he approached the door by which he had entered, thrust into its socket the great bolt. The bolt seemed really unnecessary; the lock in itself, a springlatch affair, was devised so that it held the stronger for pressure from without.

The snick of steel against steel rang startlingly loud in the speaking stillness; for a moment Quarrier had a curious fancy, a premonition almost, that it was a wasted precaution—that, in effect, he was locking and double locking that door upon an empty room—an empty strong-box. Pistol in hand, however, he began his round.

The bookcase he passed with a cursory examination; nothing there. Next the painting; a portrait of his great-uncle; it held him for a moment; those eyes had always held him; they were "following" eyes; and now for a moment it seemed to Quarrier that they held a warning, a message, a command. But he passed on . . .

A heavy leather settee was next in order. With a sheepish grimace he stooped, peering under it, straightened, going on to the double windows. That settee had been innocent of guile, but as to the windows—he paused an interval while he thumbed the patent steel catches. These were shut tight, the windows black, glimmering squares against the windy night without.

Throwing off the locks, one after the other, he pushed up the first window, released the steel outer apron, and then, in the very act of leaning outward into the black well beneath, he drew back, with a quick, darting glance over his shoulder as his spine prickled at a sudden, daunting thought.

What was that?

For a hearbeat at his back he thought to

hear a rustle, a movement, like the shuffle of a swift, stealthy footfall.

But once more there was nothing—no one.

It was thirty stories to the street beneath, and as he leaned there in the window his imagination upon the instant had swayed out down to the dreadful peril of the sheer, sickening fall.

How simple it would have been for someone behind him—how easy . . .

He shivered, the sweat beading his forehead in a fine mist of fear. A hand on his ankle—a quick heave—and then a formless blur against the night—the plunge—into nothingness . . .

Turning to the right, he surveyed the heavy door leading to the lumber-room. He tried the great key, rattling the knob. The door was locked. A quick frown wrinkled his forehead.

"Absurd!" he muttered, but there was an odd lack of conviction in the word. "Impossible!" he said again. "There's nobody in the room except myself.

But even as he spoke he knew; beyond the shadow of a doubt, that someone or something had occupied that room but a matter of seconds prior to his entry, and if he, or whatever it was, was not there now, where was this invisible presence?

The presence in the room of another than himself was a physical impossibility, unless, indeed, there was, after all, a fourth dimension, into which as a man passes from sunlight into shadow, the intruder had stepped, perhaps now regarding him sardonically from that invisible plane: A living ghost!

Absurd! And yet, there was that other fact—he had seen it: the silent, the voiceless, yet moving witness—the positive proof of a presence other than his own.

THERE, in a locked, bolted, impregnable chamber, unmarked by the least sign of entry—a main door which did not have a key, responding only to a combination known only to himself—a secondary door most obviously locked, and from the inside; windows of thick glass, triple locked with

The Dark Continents of Your Mind

DO YOU struggle for balance? Are you forever trying to maintain *energy, enthusiasm,* and the *will to do?* Do your personality and power of accomplishment ebb and flow—like a stream controlled by some unseen valve? Deep within you are minute organisms. From their function spring your emotions. They govern your *creative ideas* and *moods*—yes, even your enjoyment of life. Once they were thought to be the mysterious seat of the soul—and to be left unexplored. Now cast aside superstition and learn to direct intelligently these *powers of self.*

Accept this *Free* Book

Let the Rosicrucians, an age-old fraternity of thinking men and women (not a religion), point out how you may fashion life as you want it—by making the fullest use of these little-understood *natural faculties* which you possess. This is a challenge to make the most of your heritage as a human. Write for the Free Book, "The Mastery of Life." Address: Scribe I.R.A.

The ROSICRUCIANS

San Jose (AMORC) California

DO YOU HAVE PROSTATE TROUBLE?

General Weakness, Backache, Frequency, Burning Urination, Kidney and Bladder Distress.

The Kansas City Medical Press has just published a revealing booklet which discusses the PROSTATE GLAND in language anyone can understand. Information contained in this book may save you years of suffering. Give name and address.

MAIL COUPON TODAY

K. C. Medical Press
Dept. T-1, 1440 E. 21st,
North Kansas City, Mo.

Please send me by return mail booklets I have checked below.

The Prostate Gland ☐ Arthritis ☐
Kidney and Bladder ☐ Rupture ☐

Please enclose 10c for each book ordered.

STOP TOBACCO

Banish the craving for tobacco as thousands have with Tobacco Redeemer. Write Today for free booklet telling of injurious effect of tobacco and of a treatment which has relieved over 300,000 people.

In Business Since 1909

FREE BOOK

THE NEWELL COMPANY
324 Clayton Sta. • St. Louis 5, Mo.

MAKE QUICK EASY CASH! FREE SAMPLES

50 NAME PRINTED CARDS $1.25

Stationery Napkins

Empire CHRISTMAS CARDS

Big new line—quick PROFIT makers. Gorgeous 21 card $1 Christmas and All Occasion Assortments. Metallic comic cards. FREE Catalog. 5 NEW Christmas Card name-printed lines $1 up. Children's books. Scented stationery. NO EXPERIENCE NEEDED—Costs nothing to try. Fund-raising plan for clubs. Write today! FREE IMPRINT SAMPLES. Box Assortments on approval.

100% Cash Profit!

EMPIRE CARD CO., 302 FOX ST., ELMIRA, N. Y.

SEND FOR THIS FREE!

Make money. Know how to break and train horses. *Write today for this book FREE*, together with special offer of a course in Animal Breeding. If you are interested in Gaiting and Riding the saddle horse, check here ( ) *Do it today—now.*

BEERY SCHOOL OF HORSEMANSHIP
Dept. 8410 Pleasant Hill, Ohio

New Relief for the Misery of PSORIASIS

Now you can get relief, V. S. says, "Before using Soriasin, I had large masses of scales for 3 years. I tried everything. Then my first bottle of Soriasin did wonders. I am half way through my second bottle and my skin looks like any normal, healthy skin." New Soriasin softens and removes crusts and scales and aids in healing skin lesions and itching. Definite relief is guaranteed in two weeks or your money refunded. Soriasin is easy to apply—comforting, non-staining. ONLY Soriasin has a new pleasant cosmetic fragrance. It is the FIRST to contain an effective blanching agent which goes to work at once on ugly lesions after scales are removed. Send 25c for trial size bottle—or write today for free information and helpful facts.

SOUTHERN PHARMACAL CORP.
Suite 610, 1419 H St., N.W., Wash., E. D.C.

the latest in patent catches—someone or something had entered, passing, as it seemed, through steel and stone, like a djinn, or a wraith—through the keyhole?

Matter-of-fact as he was, hard-headed and practical, Quarrier was aware for an instant of a flicker of almost superstitious fear. But—rot! In all the space confined by those four walls and ceiling and floor there was not room for concealment even for a—cat, for instance—for nothing human, at any rate. It was beyond him, even as the thing that had entered was beyond him.

Quarrier did not believe in the supernatural with his mind; but, brave as he was by nature and training, in that moment he knew fear. But he preferred, with his intelligence, to credit Marston with it; Marston, so far as morals were considered, might have been almost anything: you saw it in his curious eyes, with their pale irises, the flat, dead color of his skin, like the belly of a snake; in the grim, traplike mouth. Quarrier had never deceived himself as to the President of Intervale Steel. The thing was fantastic, unreal—and yet. It might easily be a trap, and worse. Peril, the more subtle because unknown, was all about him; he felt it, like an emanation. What was it that the psychological sharps would call it? An aura, as of some invisible and deadly presence, seeing, although unseen.

V

THE room, or office, as has been written, was impregnable to any but an assault in force, the doors invincible save by the shattering crash of a high explosive, the windows almost equally so.

Quarrier's man, Harrison, even, would be unable to enter the room in his employer's absence; so that, knowing the combination of the safe, he could take nothing from it, or bring anything into it. He left, in the rare intervals that Quarrier suffered his ministrations, always with his master, returning likewise, if he returned at all, in Quarrier's company.

The recluse had hedged himself about

with care. Marston, with his keen, devising brain, would face a pretty problem in the recovery of those documents.

But it was when on an abrupt inspiration, Quarrier removed the telephone receiver from it hook, that he became certain that it was a trap.

"Give me Schuyler 9000," he had whispered. But even with the words he knew that the line was dead, yet it was characteristic of Quarrier that, once satisfied that this was so, he resumed his inventory of the office where he had left off.

He had completed the circuit of the chamber with the exception of the wall safe and the small, flat-topped writing desk by the door. From his position he could see the desk quite easily; there was nothing and nobody either on or under it. And now, before he twirled the combination, he laid his hand upon the doors, pulling at the handles. And then—

He recoiled, stumbling backward, as the doors swung wide with a jarring clang. Fingers trembling, he jerked forward a drawer—put in his hand. He withdrew it —empty. Confronted with the incredible truth—the thing which he had feared and yet had not believed—he stood, stunned. For the document had vanished!

Even in the midst of his excitement and dismay, Quarrier permitted himself the ghost of a faint, wintry grin. But a few hours before he had himself bestowed those papers in their particular resting place, and, observing a precaution to make assurance doubly sure, he had stationed a guard at the street level, men whom he could trust. For, in the morning he had meant to transfer those documents to that repository in the West Eighties from which Marston would never be able to retrieve them, for with their receipt would come the final quietus of the President of Intervale Steel. And that was why Quarrier had called that number, which had not answered.

Now the documents were gone and Marston was safe. But there remained a final thin thread of hope, and it was this:

The building, a new one, stood alone; Quarrier owned it; his enemies had in some

When **NERVOUS TENSION MAKES YOU ALL "KEYED-UP"**

Take Miles Nervine to relax. See how it can soothe and comfort "jangled" nerves. Contains no Barbiturates. Follow the label. Avoid excessive use. At all drugstores.

MILES NERVINE

LAW FREE BOOK

Your FREE copy of "The Law-Trained Man" shows how to gain prestige and greater earnings through Blackstone home law study. All instruction material furnished including 16 volume Law Library written by 65 well-known law authorities. Lawyers, judges among our graduates. LL.B. degree. Low cost, easy terms. Write today.

BLACKSTONE COLLEGE OF LAW 225 N. Michigan Ave. Dept. 107, Chicago 1, Ill.
A Correspondence Institution Founded in 1890

START YOUR OWN BUSINESS

on credit. Your own home. 1585 of our Dealers sold $5,000 to $97,500 in 1951. We supply stocks, equipment on credit. 200 home necessities. Sales experience unnecessary. Pleasant, profitable business backed by world wide industry. Write RAWLEIGH'S, DEPT. J-U-PBL, Freeport, Illinois.

SONG POEMS WANTED TO BE SET TO MUSIC

Submit one or more of your best poems for free examination. Any subject. Send poem. PHONOGRAPH RECORDS MADE. FIVE STAR MUSIC MASTERS, 629 BEACON BLDG., BOSTON 8, MASS.

How to Make Money with Simple Cartoons

A book everyone who likes to draw should have. It is free; no obligation. Simply address FREE BOOK

CARTOONISTS' EXCHANGE
Dept. 4810, Pleasant Hill, Ohio

MAKE all the MONEY YOU WANT — FAST!

Make up to $4.00 a pair selling exclusive Cushion Shoes

New 3-Sole style sensation! 2 Full Leather soles, hand hammered tap sole, heel-to-toe cushion, arch support. Fast sellers in dress, work, sport shoes. ONLY Cushioned Paratroop Boot. Big spare time income. No experience or investment needed. Samples to producers. Write NOW for FREE Outfit.

FREE OUTFIT PARAGON SHOE CO., 744 Columbus Ave., Boston, Mass.

NOSE TROUBLE? SINUS?

Here Is Quick Relief, Miracle CHLOROPHYLL Added

If your nose feels stuffy, drains excessive mucus constantly, brings on headaches, pains around the eyes, hawking with annoying mucus dripping down your throat, here is quick, blessed relief in a matter of minutes with amazing, new WEL-NOZE NASAL RINSE, with pure Chlorophyll added, which kills unpleasant nasal odor. The very first time you use WEL NOZE your nasal passages open up, mucus goes in a hurry, and cooling, soothing, miracle-like relief is yours, and your breath is pure. And so quick too. You feel like living again! Send only $1.00 for generous supply. (3 for 2.50) No C.O.D. please. Satisfaction Guaranteed or your money refunded. Act now! Send for WEL-NOZE with Miracle Chlorophyll added, today, for speedy relief.
DORENE CO., Dept. PF-10, Box 795, Chicago 90, Ill.

obscure fashion obtained that which they sought. And—this being so—they were in the building.

Quarrier's orders to that guard had not included the stoppage or detention of any seeking ingress. On entering, he had been informed merely that perhaps half a dozen, all told, had possibly preceded him. They had trapped him—perhaps they might even succeed in expunging him from the record together with the evidence, but they—Marston and the rest—some or all of them were in the building; they had to be.

He grinned again, a swift, tigerish grin, as he considered the trifling clue which had betrayed them. But for that he would never have discovered the looting of the safe.

And it was then, as he stood, turned a little from the safe and facing the heavy door giving on the lumber-room, that he straightened, tense, bending to the keyhole.

The door was soundproof, as were the walls, but abruptly, as a sound heard in dreams, he had heard it: At the keyhole, a sound, faint and thin, but unmistakable, like the beating of a heart.

And that sound had gone on, faint and thin, as though muffled through layers of cotton wool, persistent, regular—the faint, scarce-audible ticking of a watch.

For a moment, even while he considered and dismissed the thought that they might have planted a time-bomb against that door, Quarrier hesitated. And then, abruptly, he knew: They were in the lumber-room; he had surprised them; doubtless they waited, hidden, for his exit. He had been too quick for them; they had not counted on his escape from that cellar, and if that were so, he, Quarrier, would have something to say as to their getaway.

Silent, his automatic ready, he had opened the door into the corridor with a slow, stealthy caution. Then he was in the corridor, searching the thick-piled shadows, where, at the far end, a light hung between floor and ceiling like a star. A silence held, thick, heavy, mournful, daunting, as he began his advance—a silence burdened with a tide of threat, sinister, whispering, alive.

Just ahead of him was the first of the great batteries of elevators. A pressure upon the call-bell, and in a moment he would have with him men upon whom he could rely upon. And then, remembering, he desisted.

For he found it easy to believe that the same agency which had silenced his telephone might have cut him off here also from communication, but his finger, reaching for the signal, jerked backward, as, out of the corner of his eye, he beheld a lance of light spring suddenly from the crusted transom of the lumber-room door.

Were they coming out?

"Ha!" he breathed, deep in his throat.

He did not pause to consider how many of them there might be, or that his faithful guardians of the gate, thirty stories below, were probably silenced by the same sinister hand.

Silently, his gun held rigid as a rock; he approached the lumber-room door; then, a step away, he paused.

Here, six paces at his left, a narrow corridor led to a fire-alarm box and a window directly overlooking the main entrance and the street. Quarrier, back to the wall, thrust up a groping hand to where, just above his head, a light cluster hung. Three of the bulbs he unscrewed; then, going to the window, opened it, and dropped them downward into the dark.

Then, pistol in hand, his feet silent upon the concrete flooring of the corridor, he approached the lumber-room door.

On hands and knees, he listened a moment at the keyhole; then, still on his knees, his fingers, reaching, turned the knob, slowly, with an infinite caution, in his face new creases, grim lines. His face bitter, bleak, mouth hard, he straightened, got to his feet, thrust inward the heavy door with one lightning movement; stepped into the lumber-room, his gun, swung in a short arc, covering the two who faced him across the intervening space.

"Those documents, Marston," he commanded bruskly, "I can—use them."

His gaze, for a fleeting instant, turned to the other man, who, hands clenched at

UNIFORMS SELL BIG!

Earn Money—Full or Spare Time with TOPPS—America's Foremost Line of Embroidered Uniforms and Work Clothes!

You need no experience, no special know-how to clean up big spare-time profits with TOPPS Uniforms and Work Clothes, embroidered to advertise. Prospects are everywhere—garages, service stations, factories, lumber yards, institutions, stores—they're all sold on the POWERFUL day-after day advertising employee uniforms give them. And they buy the TOPPS line after one look—for TOPPS offers the finest fabrics, expertly tailored for long wear and perfect fit—PLUS custom-made embroidery for any business! Yes, you'll take orders fast—and every one puts a big, spot-cash commission in your pocket. One Topps salesman made $900 profit on single sale.

ORLON Uniforms Available Soon! TOPPS will be FIRST with uniforms made of Dupont's miracle ORLON fabric. They're snag-proof, mildew-proof; never need dry cleaning. They're washable! Get all the facts and actual sample now!

Mail Coupon for Free Outfit! Everything you need to start making money at once is waiting for you FREE! The powerful, full-colored Topps Style Book, order forms, etc.—it's all yours for the asking. Just mail coupon below . . . and you're on your way to the biggest earnings of your life by return mail!

TOPPS, Dept. 7310, Rochester, Indiana

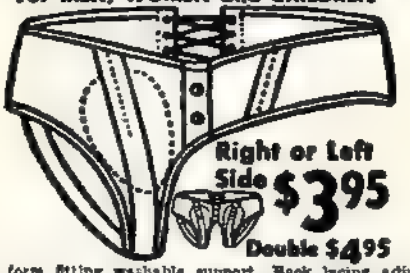
TOPPS, Dept. 7310, Rochester, Indiana
Please send me the FREE Topps Line by return mail.
Name ..... Age .....
Address .....
City ..... State .....
Have You Ever Sold Before? .....
What Product? .....

AMAZING COMFORT—NO SPECIAL FITTING

RUPTURE-EASER

Reg. in U.S. Pat. Off. (A Piper Brace Product)

for MEN, WOMEN and CHILDREN



Right or Left Side $3.95

Double $4.95

A strong, form fitting washable support. Back lacing adjustable. Snaps up in front. Adjustable leg strap. Soft, flat groin pad. No steel or leather bands. Unexcelled for comfort. Also used as after operation support. Mail orders give measure around the lowest part of the abdomen and state right or left side or double. We Prepay Postage Except on C.O.D.'s.

Over 400,000 Satisfied Users! 10 Day Trial Offer

Money-back guarantee if you don't get blessed relief

Delay may be serious—ORDER TODAY!

PIPER BRACE CO.

811 Wyandotte Dept. PFG-702 Kansas City 6, Mo.

EAT ANYTHING WITH FALSE TEETH

If you have trouble with plates that slip, rock and cause sore gums—try Brimms Plasti-Liner. One application makes plates fit *snugly without powder or paste,* because Brimms Plasti-Liner hardens permanently to your plate. It relines and refits loose plates in a way no powder or paste can do. Even on old rubber plates you get good results six months to a year or longer. YOU CAN EAT ANYTHING! Simply lay soft strip of Plasti-Liner on troublesome upper or lower. Bite and it molds perfectly. *Easy to use,* tasteless, odorless, harmless to you and your plates. Removable as directed. Plate cleaner included. Money back if not completely satisfied. If not available at your drug store, send $1.25 for reliner for 1 plate.

PLASTI-LINER INC., Buffalo 11, New York—Dept. 76-B

BRIMMS PLASTI-LINER
THE PERMANENT DENTURE RELINER

Be an ARTIST Get FREE BOOK and TRIAL PLAN

You Can Draw at Home in Your Spare Time

For 38 years our graduates have enjoyed successful art careers. We can teach you to draw—no right for you because TRIAL PLAN reveals your talent. Commercial Art, Designing, Cartooning all in one course. Get the facts in illustrated FREE BOOK, "Art for Pleasure & Profit." Write today. State age.

WASHINGTON SCHOOL OF ART
Studio 9010F Washington 5, D.C.

HYPNOTISM

Learn to apply this tremendous POWER. Develop will-power, self-confidence, self-control. ANYONE can master this exciting, profitable profession in short time by training at home, with GUARANTEED RESULTS. DON'T DELAY . . . Write to America's oldest Hypnotic school for free information now—today!

INSTITUTE OF APPLIED HYPNOLOGY
120 Central Park So., N. Y. 19, Dept. 6

TOMORROW—BOOM

TOMORROW! Your dreams of today—a puff of smoke?—or happy realities?
They will be what you make them. Thrill to the mystery of life's great adventure—MASTER IT. Dreams can be Willed into reality—This power is within YOU. Tap it and the world is yours. Write for free treatise—NOW—TODAY.

THE SEARCHERS
Guide 7, P.F. Florissant, Colorado

Re-Blue YOUR GUN

Instantly with one simple application of MINUTE-MAN GUN BLUE. No heating—can't injure steel. Send $ Your money back if not satisfied.

NEW METHOD MFG. CO.
PFG-70 Bradford, Pa. U.S. PAT. NO. 2,527,238

RUPTURED?

Get Relief This Proven Way

Why try to worry along with trusses that gouge your flesh—press heavily on hips and spine—enlarge opening—fail to hold rupture? You need the Cluthe. No leg-straps or cutting belts. Automatic adjustable pad holds at real opening—follows every body movement with instant increased support in case of strain. Cannot slip whether at work or play. Light. Waterproof. Can be worn in bath. Send for amazing FREE book, "Advice To Ruptured" and details of liberal truthful 60-day trial offer. Also endorsements from grateful users in your neighborhood. Write:
CLUTHE SONS, Dept. 15, Bloomfield, New Jersey.

his sides, stared dumbly at the apparition in the doorway.

But Marston, his face gray, his hand hidden in his pocket, shrugged, sneered wryly, his hand thrust out and upward with the speed of light.

But, for the difference between time and eternity, he was not quick enough. There came a double report, roaring almost as one: Marston's sneer blurred to a stiff, frozen grimace; he swayed, leaning forward, his face abruptly blank; then, in a slumping fall, he crashed to the floor.

Quarrier stooped, swept up the papers where they had fallen from the dead man's pocket; then he turned curtly upon his body-servant.

"You may go, Harrison," he said casually.

But if Harrison felt any gratitude for the implied reprieve, he turned now to Quarrier with an eager gesture, his speech broken, agonized:

"He—you must listen, sir—Mr. Quarrier," he begged. "He—Mr. Marston—he knew me when—he knew about . . ."

His voice broke, faltered.

"Well—?" asked Quarrier, coldly, his face expressionless.

"Mr. Marston," continued the man—"he knew—my record—I was afraid to tell you, sir. He—he found out, somehow, that I'd—been—done time, sir . . . He scared me, I'll admit—he threatened me—threatened to tell you . . . You didn't know, of course."

"Yes—I knew," explained Quarrier, simply, and at the expression in his master's face the valet's own glowed suddenly as if lighted from within.

"You—knew—" he murmured.

VI

"BUT there is one thing you can tell me," Quarrier was saying. "You had the combination of the safe, of course; we'll say nothing more about that—but—how did you get in?"

Harrison bent his head.

"Well, sir," he explained, after a moment, "it was simple, but I'd never have

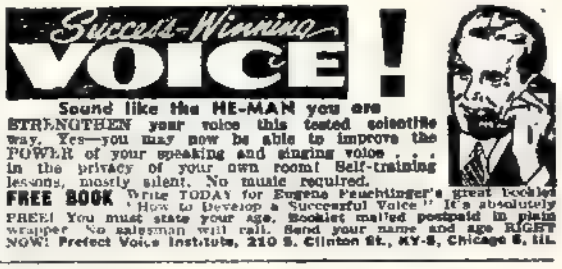
thought of it but for—him." He pointed to the silent figure on the floor.

"Well—there are just three doors, sir, as you know," he resumed. "The entrance door of your office, with the combination lock; the entrance door of the lumber-room here, both giving on the corridor; and the inside door between the lumber-room and your office. We couldn't get into the office by the entrance door from the hall on account of the combination lock, but we could and did get into the lumber-room easily enough from the corridor—the door's not even locked, as you know, sir. And that's how we got into the private office—from the lumber-room, here, through the door between."

"But how—?" began Quarrier. "That door is a steel one; it was locked—I'll swear to that. You didn't jimmy it; you didn't have a Fourth Dimension handy, did you, Harrison? But—go on."

Harrison permitted himself the ghost of a grin.

"Why—just a newspaper, and a bit of wire, sir—that was how it was done. I didn't dare unlock the connecting door beforehand, sir—from the office side; I never had the chance. I was never alone in the office, sir, even for a second, as you know; but there's a clearance of nearly half an inch, sir, beneath that connecting door—just enough for the newspaper. From the lumber-room here I pushed the



MAKE EXTRA MONEY **PLASTICS** LEARN AT HOME

LEARN HOW TO MAKE fast-selling PLASTIC NOVELTIES FURNITURE JEWELRY SIGNS TOYS LAMPS

There are RICH OPPORTUNITIES for MEN and WOMEN with "know-how" in Plastics. Interstate's new Plastics course tells and shows how to make hundreds of fast selling items out of Plastics. Gives complete training in fabrication, casting, lamination, molding, internal carving, etc., in simple, easy, step-by-step language and pictures. Plastics and Fabricating Kits for 23 valuable Plastic items come with training at no extra cost. START A PLASTICS BUSINESS OF YOUR OWN. No other industry holds such promise for the future. You can make big money manufacturing novelties, toys, signs, etc., in your own home in spare or full time. Don't wait! Learn NOW how Interstate's Plastics Training qualifies you for success in the Plastics field.

PLASTICS AND SUPPLIES FURNISHED FOR 23 VALUABLE PROJECTS

WRITE TODAY!

INTERSTATE TRAINING SERVICE
Dept. C11K Portland 13, Oregon

FISHING TACKLE DIGEST

1952 ONLY $2.50 Beautiful illustrations of 32 fresh water and 40 salt water game fish with descriptions, habits, geographical distribution and complete standard and light tackle recommendations for all 72 game fish.

Jam-packed with articles and fishing tips by outstanding experts! Hundreds of illustrations of fly, bait casting trolling, spinning and salt water tackle to help you catch more fish!

Improve your fishing! Send Cash, Check or Money Order to:

QUALITY AGENCY
214 East 49th Street New York 17, N. Y.

INVENTORS

If you believe that you have an invention, you should find out how to protect it. We are registered Patent Attorneys. Send for copy of our Patent Booklet "How to Protect Your Invention," and an "Invention Record" form. No obligation. They are yours for the asking.

McMORROW, BERMAN & DAVIDSON
Registered Patent Attorneys
188-F Victor Building Washington 1, D. C.

GLITTERING Christmas Cards MAKE $50.00 (AND MORE) CASH

Personal Christmas Cards, Sparkle like Diamonds! Shimmering, Twinkling folders everyone will love. Show this new sensation to friends, neighbors. Extra Money! Christmas & Everyday Boxes. Name imprinted cards, 50 for $1.25, up. FREE GLITTERING SAMPLES plus assortments on approval. WRITE TODAY . . .

FREE SAMPLES

CHAS. C. SCHWER CO., 81G Elm St., Westfield, Mass.

MAYBE THE STARS HAVE THE ANSWER YOU SEEK

If you wish an interpretation of the planets as they concern YOU and YOU only, send $1 with day, month, year of birth (hour if known).

JOHN R. HALL
MARSHALL, MISSOURI

Ruptured

TRY THIS!...

If you can obtain relief by holding back your rupture or ruptures in this manner—I CAN HELP YOU! Write today for my valuable FREE information which is based on 23 years of practical experience.

FRED B. MILLER, Mgr.
Dept. G, Hagerstown, Maryland

paper under the door, into the office, and then, with the wire, it wasn't so difficult to push the key out of the lock; the door was locked from the office side, of course.

"The key fell on the paper; we pulled the paper with the key on it back under the door, sir, into the lumber-room here, and—we just unlocked the connecting door there, and walked into the office. Afterwards I locked the door again, from the office side, and I just did make it out the front door of the office, when I heard your step on the stair. He was waiting for me in the lumber-room; he said it was safer. Anyway, I just did make it along the hall and into the lumber-room by the hall entrance before you came."

He paused, a queer expression in his face.

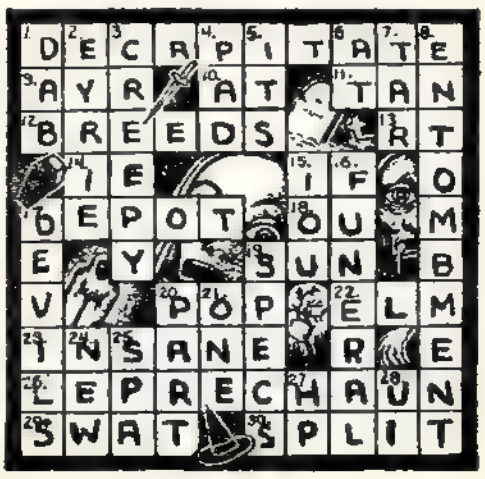
"But I don't understand how you knew, if you'll excuse me, sir—how you suspected. Afterward, from the corridor, you saw our light when we were ready to come out; we thought you'd gone for good, of course . . . But nothing was touched, sir, except—that is—of course—" He stumbled.

Quarrier silenced him with upraised hand.

"I didn't suspect, Harrison—I knew," he said. "And I heard, through the keyhole of that connecting door, the ticking of that watch of yours; it's big enough. That helped, of course. But that was afterward There was one little thing you overlooked, so did I—nearly."

There came the sound of heavy footsteps

SOLUTION OF PUZZLE ON PAGE 51



on the concrete flooring of the corridor, voices. His guards, summoned by Quarrier's "light-bombs."

Quarrier continued, as if he had not heard:

"Well—it was right under my eyes, but I almost missed it, at that. I saw it moving, and I knew that something made it move."

He paused, with a faint grimace of recollection.

"You see—you had your hat on in the office, didn't you? . . . Yes, I thought so. You're a bit deaf, too . . . Well, you should have been—to Marston. But that's past. And you have a good, thick crop of hair —so far."

Quarrier smiled frostily. "Well, you struck against it and set it moving—that was all. You never noticed it. Because it was—the chain from the electrolier, Harrison, and that was how—"

"You caught us, sir! I—I'm glad. You might call it a—"

"—Chain of circumstance," finished Quarrier.

SAVE UP TO 50% AND MORE

OUT OF PAWN

VALUES FROM $10 TO $10,000

GENUINE DIAMONDS

SAVE ON DIAMONDS FROM ESTATES, BANKS AND UNREDEEMED PLEDGES

TIME PAYMENTS ARRANGED

SEND FOR FREE CATALOG

All diamonds reset in brand new modern mountings. Sold with a written iron-clad money back guarantee. Over 100,000 satisfied customers have bought diamonds from Berman's.

Our reference—your own bank or any mercantile agency

Berman's Diamond Loan Bank

Dept. PF-BERMAN BLDG., BALTO. 1, MD.

FREE FOR ASTHMA

If you suffer with attacks of Asthma and choke and gasp for breath, if restful sleep is difficult because of the struggle to breathe, don't fail to send at once to the Frontier Asthma Company for a FREE trial of the FRONTIER ASTHMA MEDICINE, a preparation for temporary symptomatic relief of paroxysms of Bronchial Asthma. No matter where you live or whether you have faith in any medicine under the sun, send today for this free trial. It will cost you nothing.

FRONTIER ASTHMA CO. 160-T FRONTIER BLDG.
462 NIAGARA ST. BUFFALO 1, N. Y.

I Will Train You for Good Pay Jobs in RADIO-TELEVISION

You Learn at Home by Practicing with Kits I Send

Do you want a good pay job, a bright future, security? Want your own business? Then get into the fast growing RADIO-TELEVISION industry. Keep your job while learning. Hundreds I've trained are successful Radio-Television technicians. Learn Radio-Television principles from my illustrated lessons; get practical experience from kits sent.

I Trained These Men

"I received my License and worked on ships. Now with WEAN as control operator."—R. D. Arnold Rumford, R. I.

"4 months after enrolling, was able to service Radios. Averaged $10 to $15 a week spare time."—W. Weyde, Brooklyn, N. Y.

"Am doing Radio Servicing full time. Have my own shop. I owe my success to N.R.I."—Curtis Staib, Ft. Madison, Iowa.

EARN WHILE YOU LEARN

Many of my students make $5, $10 extra a week in spare time fixing neighbors' Radios. Mail coupon for actual lesson and 64-pg. book, "How to Be a Success in Radio-Television."

J. E. Smith, Pres., National Radio Inst., Dept. 2KR1, Washington 9, D. C.

Good for Both—FREE

Mr. J. E. Smith, Pres., Dept. 2KR1
National Radio Institute, Washington 9, D. C.

Mail me Sample Lesson and Book FREE. (No salesman will call. Please write plainly.)

Name.....Age.....

Address.....

City.....Zone....State.....

AUTO SEAT COVER *Bargains*

BUY BY MAIL *Save* UP TO 50%

It's the most amazing seat cover bargain in America! Complete protection for the upholstery of your car at a fraction of the prices you'd expect to pay. Our wholesale type merchandising that brings you these outstanding seat covers direct from the manufacturer through Young Products makes these unbelievable low prices possible. Act now. Order today by sending in the convenient coupon.

Red Blue or Green

COLORFUL PLASTIC

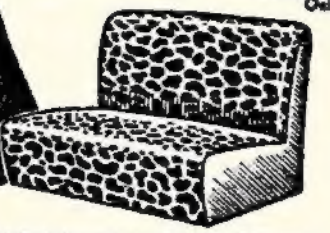
$1.98 FRONT SEAT ONLY

COMPLETE SETS for FRONT and REAR $3.89

FITS ALL CARS

Red Blue Green

SCOTCH PLAIDS Front & Rear.....$5 **$2.98** Front Only



SIMULATED LEOPARD Front & Rear.....$5 **$2.98** Front Only

LIFELIKE ZEBRA Front & Rear.....$4 **$3.69** Front Only

Try Them 10 DAYS IN YOUR CAR AT OUR RISK!

WHAT A BUY! Now at last, you can have the smartest seat covers to protect your upholstery and add distinction to your car at sensational low prices. Tailored of miracle plastic in a CHOICE OF THREE LUSTROUS COLORS to blend or contrast with the color of your car. Or, if you prefer . . . choose from this grand variety of smart patterns. GAY SCOTCH PLAIDS in a dominating color of red, blue or green. . . LIFELIKE ZEBRA that can't be told from the actual animal skin. . . SIMULATED LEOPARD that will amaze you because of its lifelike appearance. Correct fit for your car in the cover of your choice! NEW SNAP-ON ACTION HOLDS THEM TIGHT. Colorfast . . . can't fade or shrink! WATERPROOF . . . STAINPROOF . . . GREASEPROOF! Resists burns. Cleans easily with a damp cloth. Use the handy coupon below to indicate the seat covers you want. Act now while offer lasts.

MAIL COUPON *Now* FOR 10 DAY *Free* TRIAL

Young Products
Dept. 470
2605 Elmhurst
Detroit 6, Mich.

Please rush the following seat covers to me:

- ☐ SOLID TONES
- ☐ SCOTCH PLAIDS
- ☐ LEOPARDS
- ☐ ZEBRAS

☐ Front Only ☐ Front and Rear

NAME .....

ADDRESS .....

CITY..... STATE.....

MAKE OF CAR

- ☐ 2-Door
- ☐ 4-Door
- ☐ Coupe

Other . . .

Color . . .

100% GUARANTEE
Your Money Promptly Refunded If You Are Not Delighted

☐ Send seat covers listed. I will pay postman plus postage.
☐ I want to save even more. Enclosed is full payment in cash, check or money order. I understand postage will be paid by Young Products.

FREE
STEERING WHEEL COVER WITH EACH ORDER

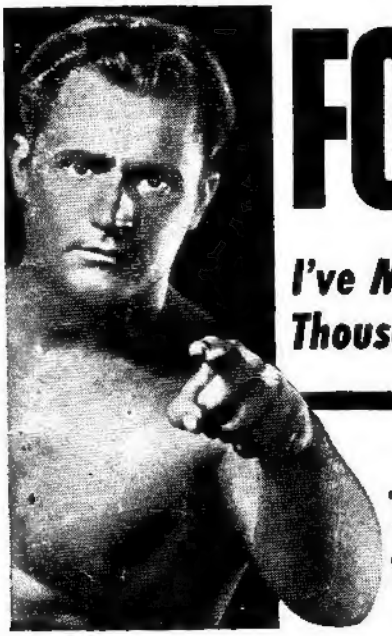
Included at no extra cost with your order for any of the seat covers listed above . . . a handy, attractive steering wheel cover that you'll be delighted to have on your car!

Limited Offer . . . Order Today

YOUNG PRODUCTS

Department 470
2605 ELMHURST AVENUE
DETROIT 6, MICH.

NEW BODIES FOR OLD!



I've Made New Men Out of Thousands of Other Fellows...

"Here's what I did for THOMAS MANFRE...and what I can do for you!"

—Charles Atlas

GIVE me a skinny, pepless, second-rate body—and I'll cram it so full of handsome, bulging new muscle that your friends will grow bug-eyed! . . . I'll wake up that sleeping energy of yours and make it hum like a high-powered motor! Man, you'll *feel* and *look* different! You'll begin to *LIVE!*

Let Me Make YOU a NEW MAN— IN JUST 15 MINUTES A DAY

You wouldn't believe it, but I myself used to be a 97-lb. weakling. Fellows called me "Skinny." Girls snickered and made fun of me behind my back. I was a flop. THEN I discovered my marvelous new muscle-building system—"*Dynamic Tension.*" And it turned me into such a *complete* specimen of MANHOOD that today I hold the title "THE WORLD'S MOST PERFECTLY DEVELOPED MAN."

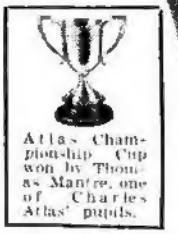
ARE YOU Skinny and run down? Always tired? Nervous? Lacking in Confidence? Constipated? Suffering from bad breath?

What to Do About it is told in my free book!

What is "Dynamic Tension"? How Does It Work?

When you look in the mirror and see a healthy, husky, strapping fellow smiling back at you — then you'll realize how fast "*Dynamic Tension*" GETS RESULTS!

"*Dynamic Tension*" is the easy, NATURAL method you can practice in the privacy of your own room—JUST 15 MINUTES EACH DAY — while your scrawny chest and shoulder muscles begin to swell, ripple . . . those spindly arms and legs of yours bulge . . . and your whole body starts to feel "alive," full of zip and go!



Atlas Championship Cup won by Thomas Manfre, one of Charles Atlas' pupils.

One Postage Stamp May Change Your Whole Life!

Sure, I gave Thomas Manfre (shown above) a NEW BODY. But he's just one of thousands I'm steadily building broad-shouldered, dynamic MEN—day by day—the country over.

3,000,000 fellows, young and old have already rambled a postage stamp to ask for my FREE book. They wanted to read and see for themselves how I build up scrawny bodies, and how I pare down fat, flabby ones—how I turn them into human dynamos of pure MANPOWER.

FREE **My 32-Page Illustrated Book Is Yours Not for $1.00 or 10c — But FREE**

Send NOW for my famous book, "Everlasting Health and Strength." 32 pages, crammed with photographs and valuable advice. Shows what "Dynamic Tension" can do, answers many vital questions. Page by page it shows what I can do for YOU.

This book is a real prize for any fellow who wants a better build. Yet I'll send you a copy absolutely FREE. Just glancing through it may mean the turning point in your whole life! Rush the coupon to me personally: **Charles Atlas, Dept. 83X, 115 East 23rd St., New York 10, N. Y.**

CHARLES ATLAS, Dept. 83X, 115 East 23rd St., New York 10, N. Y.

Send me—absolutely FREE—a copy of your famous book, "Everlasting Health and Strength"—32 pages, crammed with actual photographs, answers to vital health questions, and valuable advice to every man who wants a better build. I understand this book is mine to keep, and sending for it does not obligate me in any way.

Name..... Age.....
(Please print or write plainly)

Address.....

City..... State.....

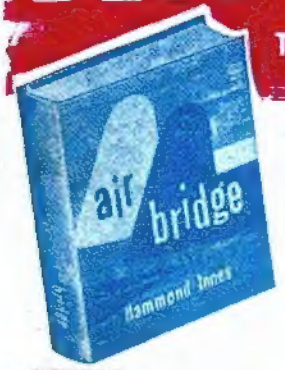
A SENSATIONAL BARGAIN FOR NEW MEMBERS OF THE ADVENTURE BOOK CLUB!

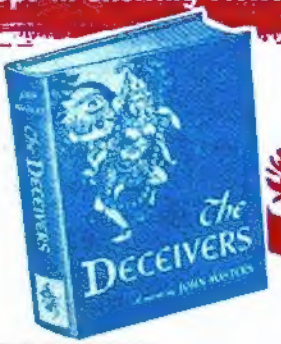
CHOOSE ANY 4 ADVENTURE HITS FOR $1!

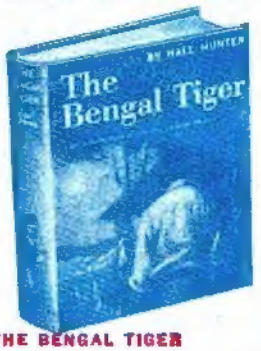
when you join

Full-Size, Hard-Bound Books!

Tops in Exciting Fiction! Up to $11.00 Value!







AIR BRIDGE
Hammond Innes
Breakneck adventure against almost impossible odds behind the Iron Curtain in Germany. Thrilling flying story by the master of excitement and suspense.

THE DECEIVERS
John Masters
He dared death to uncover the infamous cult of Kali, the Hindu Destroyer-Goddess, practicing murder and robbery on the most terrifying scale in recorded history!

New Best-Sellers! All-Time Favorites! "Big-Name" Authors!

THREE BY GRAHAM GREENE
Three full-length thrillers in one book—the best Graham Greene has ever written. This Gun For Hire, The Confidential Agent, and The Ministry of Fear. Over 500 pages!

THE JULES VERNE OMNIBUS
[illegible] pages—4 complete novels! 20,000 Leagues Under the Sea, Around the World in 80 Days, The Blockade Runners, and From the Earth to the Moon.

SAILING TO FREEDOM
Voldemar Veedam and Carl B. Wall
26 men, women, and children escape to America from the entrails of the N.K.V.D.—on a thirty-six foot, seventy-year old sloop!

THE BENGAL TIGER
Hall Hunter
Two men clash in deadly combat in the secret vault of a forbidden temple. Adventure in India's jungles, where beasts—and—men are hunted!

THE SARACEN BLADE
Frank Yerby
A peasant and an emperor storm their way together across the dazzling world of the Crusades, from the palaces of Sicily to the deserts and harems of the East!

MAIL THIS COUPON

ADVENTURE BOOK CLUB
Dept. 10PFG, GARDEN CITY, NEW YORK

Please enroll me in the Adventure Book Club. Send me at once the 4 books checked below, and bill me ONLY $1 FOR ALL 4, plus a few cents shipping cost.

☐ Air Bridge ☐ Bengal Tiger ☐ The Deceivers
☐ Jules Verne Omnibus ☐ Sailing To Freedom
☐ Saracen Blade ☐ Three by Graham Greene

I am to receive free the Club Bulletin, Adventure Trails, so I may decide in advance which future selections I want to accept. I need take only four books a year out of the 24 action novels offered, and I pay only the bargain price of $1 each, plus a few cents shipping cost, for books I accept. After accepting four books, I may cancel my membership at any time.

GUARANTEE: If not delighted, return all 4 introductory books in 7 days and membership will be cancelled.

Please Print

Name .....

Address .....

City & Zone ..... State .....

Same offer in Canada; address 105 Bond St., Toronto 2

WHY WE OFFER THIS EXTRAORDINARY BARGAIN

IT'S to introduce you to the new kind of club for men you've always wanted! Each month the editors of the Adventure Book Club select the most exciting novels of adventure—action—suspense! These books sell for as much as $3.50 in the publishers' editions, but you get them for only $1 each plus a few cents shipping.

Relax the Way Famous Celebrities Do—with an Adventure Novel!

You get the headliners in adventure fiction—by the most famous authors—in variety to suit every taste for thrills! Frontier novels, stories of adventure in the arctic and in the jungle, spy thrillers, action on land and sea and in the air!

Take as Few as Four Books a Year!

You do not have to accept every selection—just four books a year from at least 24 books offered. After purchasing four books, at only $1 each, you can cancel your membership anytime!

Mail Coupon Now!

Receive at once any 4 adventure books on this page for only $1, plus shipping cost! When you get this big package of thrills, and realize it is just a sample of the treats in store for you, you will be delighted!

ADVENTURE BOOK CLUB, GARDEN CITY, NEW YORK